

AN EXPOSITION OF  
SECOND KINGS

BY

TIM JAMES



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AN EXPOSITION OF  
**SECOND KINGS**

An Exposition of The Book of 2 Kings as Delivered in a Series  
of Messages to the Congregation of Sequoyah Sovereign Grace  
Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

BY  
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in the creation of this book.

May our God continue to make his “work appear unto [his] servants, and [his] glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Psalm 90:16-17).



# CONTENTS

Justice and Mercy 1 Kings 22:51-53; 2 Kings 1:1-18.....	11
Carried Away 2 Kings 2:1-18.....	19
Saline Solution 2 kings 2:19-25.....	27
Ditches 2 Kings 3:1-27.....	33
Grace For Grace 2 Kings 4:1-44.....	41
Sovereign Blessing 2 Kings 5:1-27.....	51
So Great Salvation 2 Kings 5:1-27.....	59
Nothing More 2 Kings 5:13-19.....	67
Response of Flesh 2 Kings 5:20-27.....	73
Swimming Iron 2 Kings 6:1-7.....	79
Safe 2 Kings 6:8-23.....	87
Despair and Depravity 2 Kings 6:24-33.....	93
Bounty for the Hopeless 2 Kings 7:1-11.....	99
Carnal Suspicion 2 Kings 7:12-20.....	107

Restoration	
2 Kings 8:1-6.....	113
Am I a Dog	
2 Kings 8:7-15.....	119
For David's Sake	
2 Kings 8:16-19.....	127
Sure Justice	
2 Kings 8:20-29.....	131
Vengeance	
2 Kings 9:1-10.....	137
Justice Executed	
2 Kings 9:10-37.....	143
Wrath Unleashed	
2 Kings 10:1-11.....	149
Howbeit	
2 Kings 10:12-31.....	155
Preservation	
2 Kings 11:1-21.....	163
Repairing the Breaches	
2 Kings 12:1-16.....	171
Without Counsel	
2 Kings 12:17-21.....	177
Groves	
2 Kings 13:1-13.....	183
And Elisha Died	
2 Kings 13:14-21.....	191
Covenant Mercies	
2 Kings 13:22-25.....	197
Presumption	
2 Kings 14:1-20.....	205
Jeroboam and Azariah	
2 Kings 14:21-15:7.....	213



Disobedience	
2 Kings 15:8-31.....	219
Jotham's Reign	
2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27:1-9.....	227
The Reign of Ahaz	
2 Kings 16:1-20.....	233
Captivity	
2 Kings 17:1-41.....	241
Hezekiah, God Slayer	
2 Kings 18:1-8.....	251
Hezekiah and Sennacherib (1)	
2 Kings 18:13-36.....	259
Hezekiah's and Sennacherib (2)	
2 Kings 19.....	267
Faith and Nature	
2 Kings 20.....	277
Sin and Grace	
2 Kings 21:1-18.....	285
The Book	
2 Kings 22:1-13.....	293
Wrath and Mercy	
2 Kings 22:11-20.....	301
Iconoclasm	
2 Kings 23:1-20.....	307
The Greatest Passover	
2 Kings 23:21-25.....	315
Natural Religion	
2 Kings 23:25-37.....	321
Captivity	
2 Kings 24-25.....	327



# JUSTICE AND MERCY

## 1 Kings 22:51-53; 2 Kings 1:1-18

1 Kings 22:

51, Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

52, And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

53, For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

2 Kings 1:

1, Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

2, And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.

3, But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?

4, Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

5, And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

6, And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it not

because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

7, And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words?

8, And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

9, Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

10, And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

11, Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

12, And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

13, And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

14, Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

15, And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

16, And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no

God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

17, So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

18, Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

**A**s we begin the study of the Second Book of Kings and continue through the remainder of the Old Testament, it is a matter of note that except for the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel, all other prophets from Isaiah through Zephaniah ministered during the period covered in 2 Kings. A sizable number of prophets and their prophecies had to do with this period. We shall see that this book mirrors the attitude of the time of Judges when men did what was “right in their own eyes” as they rebelled against God in vile and overt idolatry. This first record is a kind of harbinger for what is to come, save for a few instances where a few kings did what was “right in the eyes of the Lord.”

The account of Ahaziah could be called “par for the course” as it relates the continuing attitude of descendants of Jeroboam, of which Ahab and his doings attributed a large amount of material. The key words that followed Jeroboam throughout his lineage are found in verses 52-53 of 1 Kings 22. These words form an epitaph for the headstones of a majority of the kings of Israel after the kingdom was divided.

Ahaziah had a short reign. His life from throne to tomb was only two years, and little of what he did, save for his idolatry, is recorded for us. What we do know is that a providential plank gave way and he fell through a lattice in his palace to the ground. His fall from a great height is symbolic of the fact that the closer you are to the ground the less painful the

fall. It behooves us all to take up headquarters in the dust and never graduate from the place of the sinner save by grace.

The proof of Ahaziah's idolatry and his open rebellion is twofold.

First, being Ahab's son, he was more than likely present when the 400 false prophets bid his now deceased father to go and possess Ramoth-Gilead. He was also privy to the words of Micaiah as he preemptively rehearsed the demise of Ahab. There is no doubt that he *knows* the Word of God has come to pass precisely as it was spoken, supported by the fact that Ahaziah was now the king.

Secondly, because he was able to identify Elijah from the description given by his servants, it is probable that he was present when Elijah declared the promise of destruction of Ahab's family. With this knowledge and understanding that the Word of God is sure, proved by the death of his father and witnessed by the canine's feast on the blood of the slain king, rather than call on the name of the Lord to find out if his injuries will prove fatal, he sends his messengers to Baalzebub—the God of Ekron. *Baal* means “lord,” and *zebub* means “flies.” *Ekron* means, “plucked up by the roots.”

Because Ekron had a humid climate, it was plagued with flies. Baalzebub was supposed to help the populace rid Ekron of the pests. One can only wonder why, that of all the false gods that might be approached to find out if you are going to die, Ahaziah called the “Orkin Man,” the lord of pest control. Maybe his injuries had begun to corrupt and fester, and he was drawing flies.

Whatever the reason, the Lord of Glory was not considered in solving his problem. The meaning of *Ekron* coincides with the description of false prophets given by Jude (v. 12). Ahaziah was an idolater to his core. The mark of the idolater is that he hides in falsehoods and makes lies his refuge. Considering what men say about God, the question arises, “Why do men call on a God who cannot save them unless they first invent him, to then

help them in times of trouble?”

The angel of the Lord came to Elijah and told him to meet the messengers of Ahaziah and to ask them a very pointed question (1:3). We are reminded of the words of the prophet Jeremiah. “Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jer. 8:22). Elijah asked the same kind of question, which is an accusation and an indictment of idolatry. The true God is in Israel, the same that delivered them from Egypt and gave them the Promised Land in which they now resided, the same that performed miracle after miracle to protect and keep them—the God that gave them the prophets, the oracles, the law and the testimony, the worship and the priesthood is among them as the one who is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, and the dying king has called on the lord of the flies! Such blatant rebellion must be punished. Elijah tells the messengers to inform the king that he will not get better but will die on the bed he now lies upon.

After Ahaziah determines in his own mind that the prophet of his doom is Elijah, rather than repenting, he sends out men to bring Elijah to him or perhaps to kill him. His father hated the true prophet and maybe that attitude has passed to his son. The first captain and his fifty men come to Elijah and mocked him (v. 9-10). Though not clearly stated, Elijah's response intimates that he answers their mockery with mockery, using the same description that they have employed. Elijah, attributed with praying and there was no rain for three and one-half years, calls for fire to fall from heaven and consume the captain and his fifty. The Lord of heaven and earth who has said “touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm,” the same God who declares that He is a consuming fire, destroys the mockers of His prophet and the puny plans of the dying king.

Unperturbed by the fricasseeing of the first captain and his fifty, the king sends *another* captain and his fifty who speak with the same mockery and meet the same conflagration. Still

proving his disdain for the prophet of God, the dying royal, soon to be cadaver, sends *another* captain and his fifty. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Idolatry is insanity. But the result is different, no thanks to the insanity of the corrupting carcass, the royal regent.

The third captain and his fifty are bound by the command of the king. They must go after Elijah, just as their incinerated predecessors, but they do not have to come in arrogance, pride, and with mockery in their heart, and they do not. They come in obedience to King Ahaziah *and* in obeisance to the God of heaven and consuming fire (vv. 13-14). They sought mercy because they knew that they were but kindling before the prophet. This is where mercy is found, at the place where death for sin is indicated, required and just. Mercy *never* comes because of a sense of entitlement or merit. If you would have mercy, you must put your neck in the noose and attribute sovereignty to God, who can justly kill you or spare you. These received mercy from God, and Elijah went to the bedside of the doomed despot and *repeated* the words he had told the messengers (v. 16).

The end of the king comes in the first phrase of verse 17. He despised the God of all, and rather chose the counsel of the stone hand-made lord of the flies. His end was death.

There are many lessons to be learned from this account but the chiefest is the simplest.

There is but one God, revealed fully in the person of Jesus Christ the Lord. Hear Him or perish in the flames with all who dare to mock His Word. Men have invented many deities, and all of them are false. Their domain is the dunghill, and their dunghill deities are ended with the ease of God swatting a fly. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye Him." In Him alone is justice satisfied and mercy shown.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace



have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Psalm 85:10-11).



# CARRIED AWAY

## 2 Kings 2:1-18

1, And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

2, And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

3, And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

4, And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

5, And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6, And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7, And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

8, And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9, And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let

a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10, And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11, And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

12, And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

13, He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

14, And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15, And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

16, And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

17, And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

18, And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

**T**his is the account of Elijah being carried to heaven on a chariot of fire and Elisha receiving a double portion of the Spirit in the beginning of his ministry as a prophet

of God. Elijah and Elisha are both prominent figures in the Old Testament and though Elisha is mentioned only once in the New Testament, Elijah is mentioned 30 times. The reason for Elijah's prominent mention in the New Testament is probably because he was promised to *return* in Malachi. John the Baptist, our Lord declared, was the promise of Elijah's return fulfilled.

Elijah, as Moses was symbolic of the law, was symbolic of the prophets—both of whom spake of Christ (John 5:46; Acts 10:43<sup>1</sup>). Whether the fiery chariot and horses was metaphorical language declaring the glory of God, or what Habakkuk calls “the hiding of His power,” is a job for those smarter than me.

However, one thing is for sure. The last we see of Elijah in the Old Testament, and the time we see him again in the New Testament, is amid a display of God's glory. Elijah, the symbol of the prophets, rose into the ether in a glorious fashion, and Jesus Christ, the Prophet of whom all the prophets gave witness, ascended into the ether in like glorious manner. At the ascension of one, a double portion of the Spirit was given, and at the ascension of the other, the Spirit of the One ascending was given at Pentecost for the preaching of the gospel. The names of Elijah *and* Elisha are suggestive of the Christ *and* the Holy Spirit.

*Elijah* means “Jehovah is my God” and *Elisha* means “God is salvation.” Our Lord, while He was on this earth, revealed the Father and Himself as the Son (John 1:18; 17:6<sup>2</sup>). Though throngs followed Him for the miracles that He did and the bellies He filled, His *true* followers were small in number primarily because a physical being is followed because he is

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<sup>1</sup> **John 5:46**, For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

**Acts 10:43**, To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

<sup>2</sup> **John 1:18**, No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

**17:6**, I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

seen. A physical being's followers are geographically hindered, Christ traveled no more than 50 miles from His home town. His work was to be accomplished in His death on the cross and then to return to heaven.

For the church to expand to the four corners of the earth, that enlargement could not be based on physical sight. Our Lord, when His disciples were troubled about His leaving them, told them that He would send His Spirit to them and reveal things too hard for them to presently understand. Those hard things were only available to faith and not sight, and with the Holy Spirit, regeneration and faith would reveal the things of Christ by the Spirit through the gospel. Thus, with the faculty of God-given faith, the gospel would arrive at the ear gate and rely in no way on sight. Invisibly it spiritually expands through all the earth without being geographically bound.

The messages which I preach are shortly posted to the internet, and in a flash, they may reach the uttermost parts of the earth. At Pentecost, through the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the gospel, the expansion of the church began at Jerusalem, went to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. So, what we have in the assumption of Elijah and the double portion of the Spirit falling of Elisha is a picture of the assumption of Christ and the giving of the Spirit in a greater capacity. In fact, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune Godhead, is our Lord's other self (John 14:16-18<sup>1</sup>). Christ, as a man, had not the Spirit in a double portion, but He had the Spirit without measure. We have the Spirit severally by measure, according to the function we have in the Church and for our place in the scheme of salvation, to the praise and glory of God's grace.

Elijah was a type of the Lord in many ways beyond this ascension into the heavens. God sustained both Elijah and our

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<sup>1</sup> **John 14:16-18**, And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Lord for 40 days and nights in the wilderness. The widow's cruise of oil and bit of flour was multiplied to feed the family and the prophet. Our Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes. Elijah raised the widow's son from death. Our Lord raised the widow of Nain's son from his coffin, as well as the young maiden and Lazarus, because our Lord *is* the resurrection and the life.

Several things in this story, aside from its glorious end, set forth the person and the work of Christ.

First the oneness of Christ and the Spirit is seen in the refusal of Elisha to leave the side of Elijah. In all probably, though not clearly stated, Elisha had not left Elijah's side since Elijah cast his mantle on him, and he left all for Elijah and the ministry's sake. There is no separation between Christ and His Spirit (Col. 2:9<sup>1</sup>).

Secondly, the journey that Elijah took is a picture of the condescension and ascension of our Lord. First, he came from *Gilgal*, which means "wheel or rolling." This is indicative of purpose and providence. This journey had intent. He went from Gilgal to Bethel. Bethel means "house of God." There are two ways of looking at this. First, in a broader sense this can be viewed as Christ, according to the purpose of God for the salvation of the elect, coming from glory (the house of God). Secondly, it may also be seen as the destination of Christ's mission of mercy—the elect (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:21-22; 5:25<sup>2</sup>).

Elijah then went from Bethel to Jericho. This speaks of Christ leaving glory to come to cursed ground in that He came from heaven and dwelt among sinners, and also pictures his substitution when He was made sin for His elect.

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<sup>1</sup> Col. 2:9, For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 1:22-23, And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

2:21-22, In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

5:25, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

From Jericho, Elijah went to the river Jordan. The Jordan is symbolic of “death.” When Christ was made sin, he suffered the eternal punishment due His elect in three hours of darkness and then died of His own volition. He went *down* to the Jordan—the place of death—crossed over—and after three days made Himself live again. Elijah crossed over the midst of Jordan on dry land and came out alive on the other side. Then from Jordan's death and life, Elijah went to glory *never tasting death*.

Elijah appeared once more on the mount of transfiguration to speak of the death that Christ should accomplish. Christ will gloriously return to the earth, and the subject that will occupy the mind of all will be the death that He accomplished at Jerusalem (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10<sup>1</sup>).

Thirdly. Elijah tells Elisha that this matter of giving the double portion of the Spirit is a hard thing. This assures us that the giving of the Spirit is not by man's request but by the will of God alone. Elijah told Elisha he will have his desire if he is a witness to his glorious ascension. The Spirit of God is given to the elect that they by faith may witness the glorious ascension of Christ having finished the work of salvation. The elect *see* that wondrous thing by the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel.

Finally, in the desire and the action of the 50 prophets we see the flesh revealed. Though they saw Elijah carried away, and though they were previously made aware that it would happen (v. 3), they still wanted to search for his body. Sight begets the need for sight. Faith believes without sight, but the flesh cannot believe—it must see. Elisha told them that they were wasting their time, but they insisted. The result was that they found no

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<sup>1</sup> **Rev. 1:5-6**, And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

**5:9-10**, And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.



body, and Elisha said, "I told you so." The preacher keeps rehearsing this fact to the minds of the people. We all are prone to look for something, some proof, some tangible evidence that God has done what He has said he would do. Looking is a waste of time. Only believe.



## SALINE SOLUTION

### 2 kings 2:19-25

19, And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

20, And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

21, And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

22, So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

23, And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

24, And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

25, And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

**B**y the time this episode occurs, the news of Elijah's glorious transport to heaven has probably spread through the populace of Jericho. Likewise, the news of Elisha now wearing the mantle of Elijah has marked him as a prophet of God, and one that might be able to perform miracles. The request made by the men of Jericho may have come from the knowledge that Elisha had shown some power over water since he had caused the Jordan to divide and may

have prompted them to approach the prophet about the problem with their water source.

Some theologians have called Elisha the miracle prophet, and we will see that his ministry consisted of several miracles. The thing that is important to remember is that Elisha's name means "God is salvation." His ministry pictures the Spirit of Christ. Being such, it pictures the work of Christ in the salvation of the elect as revealed by the Spirit through the gospel. This being the case, we can rest assured that there will be natural opposition and hatred expressed by the religion of men. Just as Ahab hated Micaiah because he told him the truth, so we find the children mocking Elisha in the end of this chapter. The gospel opposes all that is false by the *fact* that is declared, and that it is the *truth*. All that is false naturally responds in actions of self-preservation. If the truth declares that I have *nothing*, when I believe that I have *something*, then the truth is perceived as my enemy.

The men of the city came to Elisha with a request. They needed a miracle. The way their request was made is interesting. They first stated that all was well—then came the "but." That little conjunction changes everything. They did not come to give a report of the condition of the city. Neither the conjunction nor the phrase that preceded it was necessary if they had simply stated what they came for. How does the situation of the city even relate to the words "I pray thee?" This is a psychological tactic that men have used since the beginning of sin in world. It is so ingrained in the human psyche that people are not even aware they are doing it. However, it has become a common tool of religion.

By stating first that all is pleasant in the city, the problem that follows is diminished in importance. Everything is good except for this *one little thing*. The truth is that the one little thing was death. The waters of the spring were polluted. The waters were malignant; the gardens which the spring irrigated were barren, and those who drank the water were sick and

dying. All was pleasant except for *that*.

Accordingly, men of religion have diminished the necessity of the pure, unpolluted, and uncompromised water of life. This thinking is the mother of the so-called “simple plan of salvation.” Men's lives are pleasant and good for the most part. All they need is just a little dose of Jesus to round things out. Preachers rarely speak of death and hell anymore, and when they do, they do so with whetted appetite for vengeance against those who do not follow *their* moral convictions. Their words betray them with catch phrases like, “let Jesus into your life,” or “won't you invite Jesus into your heart,” or “will you let Jesus be Lord of your life.” All these presuppose a life that is pleasant except for a little polluted water, a little (easily solved) problem that the miracle maker (not the Savior) can resolve. The only thing you need is salvation and that is just an issue of simple acceptance and incorporation of Jesus' religion in your life.

When the subterfuge is removed, the truth is this. Life is pleasant, and if you drink that polluted water you are going to die. The polluted gospel is not the gospel at all. It is malignant. It is death that looks and tastes like life (Gal. 1:6-7<sup>1</sup>).

Thank God; the Prophet is merciful, and in spite of the subterfuge, he will heal the waters. He does so in a way that makes no sense to nature. He pours *salt* into the water! Salt water is not for drinking; it will kill you. Salt water is not for irrigation as it deadly to plant life. Never dispose your homemade ice cream rock-salt water on your yard! Elisha (“God is salvation”) serves the God whose thoughts and ways are not the thoughts and ways of men.

Could it be that the only way to live is to die? Could it be that drinking the pure water of life is death to the flesh? The elements employed by Elisha must be viewed in a spiritual sense. They are a “new cruise” and “salt” (v. 20). The new cruise

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 1:6-7, I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

is a picture of the new creature in Christ. He is a vessel—a vessel of mercy—predestinated to be so before the world began a vessel prepared for glory. Yet, he is but a vessel. Paul described him as a dirt pot filled with the treasure of the gospel.

Salt is also indicative of the child of God, the elect, and they are so described because they, with the gospel, possess the faculties of a preservative and a seasoning or savor in the world. As salt, they preserve the world till the last of the elect is brought into the fold. As a savoring seasoning they make life taste of life through the gospel they preach.

The water is a picture of Christ as well as the preached Word, the gospel. These are in the world, and though they bring death to nature and life through the spirit, the gospel will kill you as it gives you life. The result of the preaching of the gospel is not temporary. It is said of the false prophets that “they slightly heal the people” as they cry “peace when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11) The gospel makes for pure water and the healing is permanent and eternal (v. 21b), “no more death and no more barren land.” Notice well the words of Elisha. He ascribes glory to God “Thus saith the LORD (Jehovah). “I have healed” (v. 21). What the Lord does, he does forever—nothing can be added to it or taken from it.

Verses 23-25 are an interesting bit of biblical history. The story is plain and simple. It is somewhat shocking and has become fodder for commentators because of the words “little children.” Though we all believe that justice is right and true, there is a thing in all of us that innately causes us to protect children and winces at the thought of “little children” being torn by she bears. A couple of things are important to remember here.

First, in the Jewish economy, a man was considered a child until he was thirty. At thirty he could be a priest and even be allowed to read the Song of Solomon. To be called a child at 29 was not pejorative, it was a common and accepted thing. Consequently, these “little children” could have been young

men. What they said tends to suggest that they were not *little* kids.

Secondly and perhaps more important is the word “little.” This term is often used to define substance rather than size. It can mean “insignificant” or “unimportant.” The description of those whom the two she bears tore might be “insignificant young lads.” Their words reveal that they were products of the idolatry that permeated the land. Their homes, moms and dads, had grounded them in the values of the golden calves and the worship of Baalzebub. Their hatred for the prophets was evident. It was their way of life.

Calling Elijah “bald head” was just immature hazing, but it spoke of a more deeply rooted evil. Remember, Isaiah ministered as a prophet in this time of rebellion in Israel, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah he described the result of God lifting His hand of restraint from the people (Isa. 3:5). Disrespect for elders and those in authority are a mark of rebellion against God. Their attitude and actions revealed their heart. When they said “Go up,” they were doing more than hazing the prophet. They were *mocking God!* They were saying, “Why don't you do like Elijah and go up and away from us.” They were content with the way things were. The situation in the city was pleasant, and this bald-headed prophet was not welcome, though he had told them the truth about *who* healed the waters. Religion would be happy and rest contented if the truth and those who speak it would just disappear. That enormous, gigantic, well-oiled machine could operate without even the mention of the name of Christ, as is evidenced by their hatred for the truth.

God's response is quick, effectual, and vicious! He sent two she bears, renowned for their fierceness when their cubs are threatened. One of *God's* cubs, Elisha, is mocked, and God has said, “Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm” (1 Chron. 16:22). Forty-two of the insignificant young lads paid a painful if not fatal price. The Lord said. “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring

hither, and slay them before me” (Luke 19:27).

God is jealous for His glory, and His glory was mocked, the glory that carried Elijah to heaven in a chariot of fire. Elisha means “God is salvation,” and to mock God's salvation is to mock that thing which fully glorifies Him. Mess with what you will, but don't mess with the *gospel*.



# DITCHES

## 2 Kings 3:1-27

1, Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

2, And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

3, Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

4, And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

5, But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

6, And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7, And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

8, And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

9, So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

10, And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11, But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of

the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

12, And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13, And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14, And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15, But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16, And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17, For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18, And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19, And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

20, And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

21, And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

22, And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on

the other side as red as blood:

23, And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

24, And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

25, And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

26, And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

27, Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

**A**haziah has died at the word of the Lord. Jehoram now reigns over the ten tribes of Israel, and though he has put away the image of Baal that had been raised up, he yet worships the golden calves that Nebat built and still employs the prophets of his mother and father. Like those that preceded him, he “wrought evil in the sight of the Lord” (v. 2).

This chapter is the record of Jehoram going to war with the king of Moab, who after the death of Ahab had ceased paying taxes to Israel (vv. 4-5). After he numbered Israel to set his army in array, he called on Jehoshaphat to join him in the battle. It is probable that he did this out of a kind of superstition, believing the presence of Jehoshaphat would bring good luck since Jehoshaphat served the God of Judah and not the gods he worshipped. Jehoshaphat agreed to join him and

supplied the plan of attack through the wilderness of Edom whose king had also joined forces with Jehoram. This was probably designed as a flanking maneuver to attack the king of Moab on his weak side.

Regardless of the wisdom of the plan, divine providence had a different design for these three kings. Armies run on their stomachs, and after seven days in the wilderness, their supply of water ran out leaving them stranded in the desert. Ever ready to shift blame, the sinner always assigns responsibility for their estate to God (v. 10). Note that he blamed God for putting these three kings together and decided to accuse God with a sinister plan to destroy the armies of Israel and Judah by the hand of the king of Moab. It did not matter to him that he had not sought the counsel of God before he made his plans. His dim view of the true God was that He had taken on the attributes of his false, cruel, and conniving idols.

Jehoshaphat once again calls for a prophet and Elisha is nearby. The three kings go to Elisha rather than call Elisha to them, probably out of respect for the prophet and certainly for Jehoram. A show of honor and respect might alleviate some of the bad history that his family had with true prophets (through Elijah—three and a half years of drought; Mt. Carmel; Ahaziah; Micaiah, and Ramoth Gilead; through Elisha—Forty-two children torn by she bears).

Elisha makes it clear that if Jehoshaphat were not with the other two kings that he would not give Jehoram the time of day and mockingly told him he ought to seek counsel of the false prophets bought and paid for by his mom and dad (v. 13-14). Because the presence of Jehoram is an irritant to Elisha, he calls for a minstrel to play music to calm his spirit. “Music soothes the savage breast.” When the minstrel plays, the hand of the Lord comes upon Elisha (v. 15). This means that the word of the Lord concerning this incident came to Elisha.

The word of the Lord instructed these thirsty armies to dig a lot of ditches in the valley, to make the valley *full* of ditches,

and the Lord would fill them with water to slake their thirst, as well as their beasts. Elisha tells them they will hear no thunder, see no wind and will not, as in the days of Elijah, hear the sound of the abundance of rain (v. 17). “Dig the ditches and the *Lord* will fill them with water.” Elisha further tells them that this entire thing with the ditches is but “a light thing in the sight of the Lord” (v. 18). His meaning was that this thing with the ditches and the water was but a means to an end, and the *main* thing was that the Moabites would be delivered into their hand. After Moab is routed, the armies of Israel are to destroy everything in Moab (v. 19).

At the time of the morning sacrifice, water appeared and began to fill the ditches so that Edom was filled with water. When the Sun rose and shined on the ditches filled with water, the Moabites saw the red glare running in rivulets and perceived that it was blood running on the ground. They surmised that the three armies of Israel had destroyed one another (v. 23). When they went down to the valley to take the spoils of war they were *routed* by the Israelites and fled to their country. Israel pursued them and did as the Lord had commanded (vv. 24-25).

When all else failed the king of Moab gathered 700 of the finest, and they were not successful (v. 26). At the last the king of Moab, to appease his god, offered up his firstborn son, heir to the kingdom, to no avail, and at last the remainder of his troops deserted him and returned to their homes (v. 27).

That is record, the tale told, and the revelation that men and the elements are the tools of the Sovereign, employed for the good of His people, the destruction of His enemies, and the glory of His name.

When all the particulars are whittled to the nucleus of this story, we are faced with the thing that is the nucleus of *every story* and *every incident* that concerns men and God. This is about life and death.

While reading this account of the water and the blood I thought of our Savior on the cross. When he was pierced there

came forth *water* and *blood*. In Scripture, water is often put for life and blood for death in the Scriptures. There are several things for us here.

First, though not plainly stated, an ongoing scriptural principle is clearly suggested. This entire scenario, the salvation of God's people and the destruction of the enemy, was for a singular person. The exchange between Jehoram and Elisha reveals this person (v. 14). This glorious victory was for the sake of one man—Jehoshaphat. Thus it is with the salvation of the elect; it was accomplished for Christ's name's sake (Phil. 2).

Secondly, Jehoram's small religious concession on removing the image of Baal (v. 2) did not change his guilt before God. He continued in that which caused Israel to sin against God. Mixture of the true and false is forbidden.

Thirdly, what is born in the storm dies in the calm. After all this, Jehoram was not changed. He died in idolatry. In dire straits, men will call on God to seek His help by aligning themselves with those whom God has favored. When the dust clears, those who consider God only in times of trouble will consider him no more.

Fourthly, water supplied was life to the people of God but was perceived by the enemy as death (v. 22). Any number of applications may be made here as to the enemy's (religion's) perception of Christ crucified. Their perception that the water in the valley was blood came by reason of *light*. The morning Sun shown on the water, and it appeared red. It appeared as blood at the time of the morning sacrifice. That sacrifice pictured Christ, as did the *Sun*, *water*, and the *blood*. Christ is the Sun arising "with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). He is the "bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). He is the "day star" arising in your heart (2 Pet. 1:19). It was the *light* that was the source of their perception, and "the natural man receives not the things of the spirit" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Our Lord gave light to *His* people by speaking in parables and consequently confounded the enemies of the gospel. Light

discloses error and dispenses darkness. Also, the perception that the water was blood (or death) mirrored the mind of those who crucified Christ. Though the blood and death of Christ was the salvation of the elect, those who nailed him to the cross believed that His death was *their* victory. They had rid themselves of their nemesis, or so they thought, but the one who they thought dead would be the death of them.

Finally, we see the king of Moab sacrificing his firstborn son to his false and vengeful god. This is a picture of the mind of men since their fall in Adam. It has produced countless counterfeits of God giving His firstborn and only begotten son, the heir to the kingdom, for the sins of His people. The sacrifice of Moab's the king's son for the appeasement of his deity, accomplished *nothing*. He went down in utter failure. Only the blood of the perfect sacrifice, God's own blood, can propitiate God for sin. The record is clear. The blood-death of Christ satisfied God and redeemed His elect *absolutely*. Anything short of that absolute success is vain oblation.

To God be the glory for *thirst* and for *water*, for *ditches* and the *Sun*, for *blood* and *death*, both understood and misperceived.





# GRACE FOR GRACE

## 2 Kings 4:1-44

1, Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2, And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

3, Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4, And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

5, So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

6, And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

7, Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

8, And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

9, And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10, Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool,

and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

11, And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12, And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13, And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

14, And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15, And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16, And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17, And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

18, And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19, And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20, And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

21, And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

22, And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23, And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

24, Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant,

Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

25, So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

26, Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

27, And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

28, Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29, Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30, And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31, And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32, And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33, He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34, And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35, Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36, And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37, Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

38, And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

39, And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

40, So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

41, But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

42, And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

43, And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

44, So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

**T**his chapter brings Elisha back into the picture and suggests why he attained the accolade as a miracle prophet. The meat of the chapter involves the Shunammite woman and her dealings with the prophet.

The chapter is book-ended with two reports that encapsulate the assurance of the children of God. Before we

look at the Shunammite woman, we will consider these two stories as they relate to the child of God.

The first story is found in verses 1-7. Some say this woman was the widow of Obadiah who hid many prophets in a cave. Other says that she was the widow of one of the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Since it is not declared, it is enough to say that she was a widow who was destitute and feared that she was about to be brought into the bondage of servitude to those whom she owed. How she got in such straits is not identified, but we can see that she represents the child of God who is utterly dependent on the help of the Prophet. This pictures every believer and is reminiscent of the believer who throughout his life comes to the place where he has a diminished view of what he has in Christ. Trials and tribulations are designed to bring us to Christ, and they would not be necessary if we did not often stray.

She had a pot of oil and in that pot she had it *all*. Because of circumstance, she viewed the oil she had as insufficient to her need, and if not insufficient, it was not regarded at all. But as the story unfolded, we see that *that one pot* of oil filled all the pots she could borrow and had enough left over to provide for her family without end. That *one* pot of oil pictures *all* spiritual blessings in Christ. The believer, the elect, have all these blessings in Christ from the foundation of the world, though they are only made aware of it through the gospel (Eph. 1:3<sup>1</sup>).

In times of trouble and when overwhelmed, the believer often turns his eyes to the things that beset him. It is not until the true Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ, informs him through the gospel that having Christ he has all, he is brought to see that in that pot all his debts are paid; he has grace sufficient for all his days—throughout eternity. That all things are his is clearly seen when Christ reveals that the grace of God is not only sufficient, but also exceeds all he could ever think our ask.

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<sup>1</sup> **Eph. 1:3**, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

The oil is figuratively of the Spirit of Christ that takes the things of Christ and shows them to the believer. The Spirit makes no new inventions but reminds the believer that all he needs is in that pot, and its contents will never be exhausted. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all* things into his hand” (John 3:35).

The second story is found in verses 38-44. This has to do with the food of the believer. This food is symbolic of Christ, through the word. The believer feasts on and lives off the Word of God—*the gospel*. To the world it may not seem like much, but it is sufficient to feed the host.

This episode reminds us of the loaves and fishes that fed the 5000 in the hands of Christ. The caveat here presented as “death in the pot” is metaphorical language employing the effect of the wild gourds from the wild vine. This represents our personal input into the word of God. It cannot and does not belong. It is death in the stew. It is not palatable until the meal (Christ the bread of life) is cast into the pot. This pictures our thoughts and notions being brought to the obedience of Christ and is sufficient to feed all His people with plenty to spare. Like the cruise of oil and the handful of meal, the word of God never diminishes though we feed from it forever. We all fade as a leaf, but the word of God endures forever (Isa. 64:6; 1 Pet. 1:25<sup>1</sup>). His spirit, through His word, forever sustains the believer.

In this chapter and between these two stories is found a wonderful story of grace (vv. 8-37). This dear woman is an example of the believer, the elect, to whom God has given faith which works by love.

Why is her story a type of the life of the believer?

First, *she had great regard for the prophet*, the preacher, and constrains him to eat bread when he passed by her house (v. 8). Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus that constrained our

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 64:6**, But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

**1 Pet. 1:25**, But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Lord to come to their house and break bread, so did this woman because she sanctified God in her heart. Food for the preacher may not seem like much, but we serve the Lord by caring for the household of faith. She perceived that he was a man of God, a holy man, and added a room to her house, furnishing it that he might rest on his journeys from Carmel to Samaria (v. 10). The prophet always had a place in her house. She was graced (a great woman), and being graced, she was gracious. One of the marks of the one to whom God has shown grace is a gracious and giving spirit.

Secondly, *she was content* (v. 13). When Elisha summoned the lady and asked her what she wanted, or if he could do something for her, she simply replied. "I dwell among my own people" (v. 13). She was saying that she was fine and was satisfied with her life—she had enough. But Elisha was intent on blessing her, so he called her again and promised her the one thing that is of premier interest to a woman in Israel. The Messiah would be the seed of woman, and to be barren was the saddest of condition for a woman. Elisha promised her a son.

Thirdly, *she desired the truth*. She called Elisha "the man of God" and counted on him to tell her the truth. Several years ago. Henry Mahan. went to the bedside of a dying member of his congregation. He asked his brother if he was ready to meet the Lord. His dying brother replied, "I am if you told me the truth." What a simple but profound statement he made. This is the calling of the preacher. It is not to organize, counsel or lord over the flock of God. It is to tell the *truth*, declaring the glorious gospel of Christ each time he stands in the pulpit—"thou man of God, do not *lie* to thy handmaiden."

Fourthly, *every grace given comes with tribulation*. The believer does not enter glory on a flowery bed of ease. It is given unto you "not only to believe on [Christ] but also to suffer for His sake" (Phi 1:29). Many of the family in our congregation are in times of trial as I write. Some time had passed since this woman had been given a son, and then the terror of every

mother struck. The child fell, hurt his head, and died. She put the child on his bed, closed the door to the room and went to see the prophet. Her husband, seeing their son was dead, told her that it was a waste of time and put forth *religious* reasons for not bothering the prophet. Her trip to see the prophet was prefaced with the fact that she was a woman of faith. In verse 23 she said, “It shall be well.” She believed the *promise* she had received and was about to remind the prophet of it.

Some may see her as presumptive, but not so! This was not presumption! The woman was like Abraham when he raised the knife to plunge it into the heart of the seed of promise; he did so believing that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19<sup>1</sup>). Abraham is not alone in that great catalogue of faithful believers. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Women received their dead raised to life again” (Heb. 11:35). This is a subtle mention of this Shunammite woman.

Often, we see men in scripture reminding God of His covenant promises through prayer. There is no doubt this woman was grieving, but she was also believing. She was a *believer*. When Gehazi asked if her child was well, she said, “It is well” (v. 26), and she said that because she *believed the promise*. In the end, isn't that all *we* have—the promise? But the promise declares that it *will* be well.

Fifthly, *her words declare the estate of the believer* (v. 28; also v. 16). She was saying that she didn't ask for any of this. Is this not the case of every graced child of God? Did you desire Christ when grace found you? Were you looking for Christ when God awakened you to what He had done for you? Did you seek the promise and the tribulation that attended it? Did you sign up for this? No, but Paul calls the pain and sorrow, as hard as the pain may be, “but a light affliction” when held over against the weight of the glory that awaits us (2 Cor. 4:17). I have

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<sup>1</sup> **Heb. 11:17-19**, By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.



personally known many suffering men and women who did not even speak of their affliction but of the hope that was in them of a day not far hence when it shall be well.

Finally, because the “promises of God are yea and amen in Christ,” it was well after all (2 Cor. 1:20). God raised the child from the dead. I was reminded of Job as I read this. He lost ten children, and the record is that God gave him double for all he lost. God gave him 10 more children on earth to go along with the 10 that awaited him in glory. We who believe can say, through tears, sorrow, and anguish of soul—“It shall be well.” It is God who has promised, and he cannot lie. He has given us faith to believe the promise, and it shall be well (Isa. 3:1-10<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 3:1-10**, For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.



# SOVEREIGN BLESSING

## 2 Kings 5:1-27

1, Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

2, And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

3, And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4, And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

5, And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6, And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7, And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8, And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

9, So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot,

and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

10, And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11, But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12, Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13, And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14, Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15, And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16, But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17, And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18, In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19, And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed

from him a little way.

20, But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21, So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22, And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23, And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24, And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25, But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26, And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27, The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

**J**ust a light perusal of this chapter sets forth the power of God and His sovereign control on many levels. Naaman was a captain in the army of Benhadad, and the deliverance referred to (v. 1) is the victory over Ahab, king of the Jews. But

any and every victory belongs to the Lord. The companies referred to (v. 2) are marauders, or bandits and their spoils, and this young Jewish maiden will prove the healing of Naaman. Providence rules in the realm of human history. This great story is full of gospel teaching, but I will wait to address that point in the next study.

For this study, let us take departure and go to the place where this entire story is encapsulated into one sentence. In Luke 4:27 our Lord teaches the meaning of this entire chapter of 2 Kings. “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27).

I think it will help us in understanding the intricacies and nuances of 2 Kings 5 when we view it considering its New Testament meaning because when the New Testament refers to an Old Testament passage, *that* is the meaning of the passage. The Old Testament was what Christ and His disciples used to declare the gospel.

The words of our Lord in Luke 4 had brought about a controversy. When Christ declared that the prophecy of the Messiah in Isa. 61 was about Him, He was saying in no uncertain terms that He was the Messiah (Luke 4:21<sup>1</sup>). One would think that such an announcement would have thrilled everyone in that room, but these men were not interested in the Messiah, though he was often the topic of conversation. They dismissed the claim of Christ as Messiah (Luke 4:22c<sup>2</sup>) because apart from regeneration by the Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel, the interest that men have in God and His Christ is limited to how the Lord can improve their current condition. Not only that, they thought they had a leg up because Christ was a hometown boy. They were interested in His healing abilities, which had acquired Him some local fame (v. 23).

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<sup>1</sup> **Luke 4:21**, And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

<sup>2</sup> **Luke 4:22c**, And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

They felt a sense of *entitlement*. This is the general thinking that permeates the religion of this day. Very few are interested in Christ the Savior except that by “accepting” Him they can tap into the wealth of benefits that He has for them and serve as nothing more than a supply spigot. Since they erroneously believe that He came to save the whole world and had no particular interest in any one person, to them it stood to reason that they are entitled to what He has to offer (riches, health, happiness, etc.). This is why that even at the suggestion that Christ did not die for everyone, but for a particular chosen people, the ire of the entitled religionist is raised. These here in Nazareth were somewhat incensed that Christ had been healing folks and doing miracles in the towns surrounding Nazareth, and they, being His own townsfolk, felt that He should be meting out His blessing to them.

This is what Christ meant with the words He spoke in Luke 4:23. “And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.” The Lord's words in verse 24 are an indictment against this gaggle of religious zealots. “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country” (Luke 4:24). By referring to Himself as an unwelcome *prophet*, He was indicting them for caring more about what they could *see* and *experience* than the word of God. He had just told them that He was the Messiah—promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15—declared by all the prophets, pictured in every slain lamb, temple ceremony, artifact, and every book of the Old Testament.

But their interest was in miracles of healing. Sound familiar? Like the writer of old who said, “Hang the quotations man, tell me what you know.” Religion cares not for words from the Prophet, which are received by faith and cannot be proven, but they seek that which can be seen and can be validated by empirical evidence. The difference is faith and sight, and believers walk by faith while unbelievers walk by sight. The

words of Christ at first and that which followed, stirred up the homicidal hearts of this multitude of gift seekers. “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (Luke 4:28-29).

Having declared himself a prophet, our Lord calls up the names of two other prophets who, by their action and words, would not be welcome among this bunch either, especially after He illuminated their missions. These gift seekers would have despised both Elijah and Elisha because they had done precisely what Christ had done. Elijah, in the time of the three and a half year drought, had been sent by the Lord to no widow in Israel. Every one of the hometowns widows had been bypassed. He was sent instead to the house of a gentile widow where he was fed and cared for. All the while, numerous women lost their husbands, and he did not lift a finger for three and a half years to help one of them. While widows were being made daily in Israel, he and the gentile widow were cared for by a miracle from God.

Then our Lord mentions Elisha, the miracle prophet. “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27).

Christ was famous for miracles, and miracles were what this outfit was looking for from their locally grown preacher. In the time of Elisha there were many lepers, a dreadful disease that pictured the debilitating nature of sin. It was a veritable cornucopia of opportunity for a miracle worker. But Elisha was not sent to one of these poor, wretched, aching and suffering creatures. They were left to live with the pain of their insidious disease. But there was an enemy of Israel, a captain in the army that had ended the career of a king of Israel. That great captain was a gentile leper, and Elisha was sent to *him* and *healed* that infidel *while Israel suffered*. He was a prophet who cleansed an



infidel at the command of the Lord. The Lord showed by word and by example that *the* God does as He pleases, is obligated to no one, and no one is entitled to His blessings but those whom He has *chosen*.

What a shock to the system it must have been to these good religious folk. Christ the Prophet, the Messiah, has not been sent to them. God had no intention of healing them and had passed them by in the exercise of His sovereign mercy (Dan. 4:17<sup>1</sup>).

As we consider 2 Kings 5 in our next study, this episode in Luke will help us to look for sovereign blessings and the providence of God in the rule of all things to reveal His mercy in its true light.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan. 4:17, This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.



# SO GREAT SALVATION

## 2 Kings 5:1-27

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3, And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4, And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

5, And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6, And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7, And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

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and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

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11, But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

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13, And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14, Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15, And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16, But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17, And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18, In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19, And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed

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20, But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

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22, And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23, And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

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26, And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27, The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

**W**e saw in the last lesson that this entire chapter has to do with electing grace and God's prerogative to bless whom He will. All men are obligated to God, and God is obligated to no man. If God has blessed, it has

nothing to do with debt, recompense, or reward. It has to do with his sovereign will and purposed design, which will eventuate in the glory of His grace.

Naaman's healing, as does every miracle of healing, pictures salvation by power beyond the ability of the human creature. His healing from leprosy is a natural recovery that symbolizes eternal recovery. In some cases, but not all, the recipient shows real repentance and thanksgiving. In Luke 17:12-19 our Lord healed ten lepers, but only one returned to give glory to God. This episode in the story of grace reveals that physical healing is not soul salvation but can be part of the providential process that brings a sinner to call out for mercy (e.g., Bartimaeus; the Syrophenician woman). It appears that the miracle that restored Naaman to sound health turned his heart from idols to the true and living God (v. 15). That being so, I believe one may approach this chapter as a true representation of the salvation of the elect.

We speak of amazing grace, the glory of God's grace, grace super-abounding where sin abounded, and grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. This language *fills* the mental library of the sinner saved by grace (1 Cor. 15:10<sup>1</sup>). The salvation of a sinner is a truly wondrous thing, so wondrous that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews calls it "so great salvation." It is great because only by revelation and the gift of faith are we privileged to enter in, in part, to the eternal councils of God as He, through the preaching of the gospel, shows us enough to leave us in awe of His power and wisdom. Sovereign providence guided every step we took, every thought that entered our minds, every turn and twist of our course until that day when we were made aware of our horrible estate and the sure salvation wrought by the omnipotent God. We cannot fathom it, except by faith, because we cannot grasp the intricacies of

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Cor. 15:10**, But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

how God employed His *universe* to bring us to the feet of Christ. It is magnificent to consider, and precisely where we cannot comprehend; we bow in utter adoration to the God of all grace and all glory.

Let us consider several things.

*Naaman's condition is immediately declared* (v. 1). Though God had made him to have social standing and made him to be an honorable and great man, the defining thing about him was that he was a leper. Note that the disclaimer, the conjunctive phrase “but he was,” is in italics meaning that it has been added by the translators for our better understanding. Since the word “but” means that what follows is opposite of what precedes, this suggests that the disease was an anomaly. If you lift out the italicized phrase, you find that rather than an anomaly, “leper” was as much a description of Naaman as was his honor and his greatness. His leprosy was likewise part and parcel with what the LORD had made him to be. He was a mighty man of valor, a leper.

This teaches us that no matter the station, whether prince or pauper all men are sinners, and though providence may have made us able to cover our malady in stature and finery, we are but a leper wrapped in splendid attire. We know, from the words of Christ in Luke 4, that Naaman was one of many lepers in that day, and the only difference between he and the many was grace, and grace alone. He was a *chosen* leper, and he wasn't chosen on the spot. God set his affection on this man before the world began, and just as the murrain affected only the cattle of Egypt, he ordained this infectious disease to travel across time and invade the body of this chosen sinner. His malady made him a hopeless pariah, and though he was great, valiant, and honorable, the lowest quarry slave would not trade his slavery for one second in this man's skin. The *knowledge* of his disease made him aware of his hopelessness.

*For every elect sinner, God has a message and someone to deliver it* (v. 2). As Naaman sat in his misery, gangs of marauders were

out and about capturing slaves, kidnapping young Jewish women to be house-servants of the wealthy members of Syrian society. Such a child had been stolen from her home, from her parents to minister to the wife of the leper. Of all the people in Syria, this young maid held in her possession the good tidings of hope. A criminal enterprise had brought her to his house showing that the Lord of providence employs whom He will to bring the gospel to the elect.

*Her message was simple: the prophet can recover the master from his leprosy* (v. 3). Who would believe such a thing? Leprosy is an incurable, progressively debilitating disease and ends in painful and ignominious putrefaction, and isolated death. To whom would this simple statement be good news? It would only *resound* in the ears of the *hopeless*, the *afflicted*, the *dying*. Those ruined and dying in sin find the gospel to be their singular hope. We who have been saved by grace have no difficulty identifying with what this news must have meant to Naaman. A ray of light dispels the darkness of his dreadful dungeon (vv. 3-5).

What hope must have teemed in his bosom as he stood in his chariot headed toward what he believed was his salvation. He brought with him silver, gold, and ten changes of raiment to reward the prophet when he was healed. But we are not redeemed with corruptible things such as “gold and silver” but by the “precious blood” of the Lamb (1 Pet. 1:18-19), as Naaman will soon discover.

Several things included in this encounter with the prophet are very telling.

*First, though Naaman is a leper, a condemned man, he still held onto the vestiges of his status.* He came and stood *outside* the house of the prophet (v. 9), suggesting that he felt his position afforded him the right to have the preacher come *out* and see him. He did not come begging, camping at mercy's door—he came abounding with gifts figuring the preacher could use some support. This is supported by the fact that when the prophet did



not come out to him, he was offended. He had the common misconception that the prophet was interested in filthy *lucre*. His words also indicate what men think about preachers and the ministry. He expected some religious expression. He expected the preacher to come out, wave his hand, do some abracadabra, smack him on the forehead, and make him fall down, or some such physical or visible display of holy tomfoolery (v. 11). Though not stated, the way he expressed his anger suggests that he was looking for some *grand* gesture. Note that he did not say “and recover me,” he said, “recover the leper,” as if religion was about the disease and not the person. Perhaps he believed he was up to standard except for this inconvenient malady.

*Naaman did not even get to see the prophet.* The prophet sent a messenger, his servant with a message, a word, an instruction, and this incensed Naaman (v. 10). He wanted to *see* something, but salvation is through faith, not *sight*. Men want to *see* Christ fix their problem, but all they will get will be His *servant*. Men want religious display and some wow-factor, but all they will get is a sinner with a word, a preacher with the message of grace.

*The message will have an ill effect on the flesh* (vv. 10-12) When he heard that he would be cleansed by washing in the Jordan, he was enraged. The Jordan was a dirty, muddy river, and there were fine clean rivers in his country that he could wash in. But his issue was not really the quality of the rivers but the presumed dignity of his person. His presumed self-value could not abide being reduced to a message from a servant and a message that reduced him to entering a common place—he deserved better, and he went away in a huff.

Ultimately, his actions revealed that he was a self-righteous sinner, and that he had a notion of salvation, but it involved more than a plain and singular instruction. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” but the carnal heart says, “there must be more to it than just that?” The names of the

rivers in Damascus come from root words that mean “to build” and “ineffectual.” This calls to mind the words of Paul concerning those who would not submit to the righteousness of God (which is Christ) and instead go about to establish (build) their own ineffectual righteousness. The Jordan was not for them, there were better rivers, better ways to be saved. It seems even the hopeless can still harbor hope in themselves, but pride of personal merit and worthiness must go.

*Finally, Naaman’s servant presented him with a reasonable argument* (v. 13); he did as he was instructed and was healed. He washed seven times in the Jordan and his leprous flesh was turned into the flesh of a baby—clean every whit (v. 14).

This has been a short summary of the story of Naaman. We will next study the glorious meaning of the cleansing produced by the Jordan and the repentance that follows.

# NOTHING MORE

## 2 Kings 5:13-19

13, And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14, Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15, And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16, But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17, And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18, In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19, And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

**W**e have seen in previous studies how that Naaman is one of the characters that our Lord used to declare the sovereignty of God in electing grace as He spoke to His hometown crowd in Luke 4. In the last study, we saw that when Naaman came to the prophet for healing, he had some preconceived notions of how that process ought to go. He, being a man of some stature, assumed that he would be afforded some religious niceties and some religious display. Though the definitive thing about him was his disease, he approached the prophet in a demeanor of entitlement rather than of desperate need. When the prophet did not come out to meet him but sent out a servant with a simple instruction, he was incensed, though the instruction came with the *promise* of recovery from his disease.

Simply following the instructions was the difference between life and death, but Naaman felt that such a simple thing would discount who he was. So it is with the declaration of the gospel. “Believe and be saved” removes all possibility of boasting and the glory of self because even that requirement waits on the will and benefaction of God to give it. We tell men to believe and pray God will give them faith to do so. The reaction of the flesh to Christ is almost always “Is that all there is?” Because men believe so many things, with seeming effortlessness, they assume that to believe Christ is something that they can do as a matter of course. Faith, however, is a *miracle* of grace, given at the will and prerogative of God. All men have not faith. So says the scripture, and those who do have “saving faith” owe it to the graciousness of Almighty God.

Naaman, in our last study, was in a huff and ready to go back home with his gold, silver and finery. He was still dying, still as good as dead, and still ravaged with leprosy, all because the truth, a simple instruction, a singular command was deemed to be beneath his estate. Will a man choose death rather than life? He will, if it means that he can somehow play a part in the salvation of his soul. God gave manna in the wilderness to

prove the people, to reveal if they would be pleased with what God had given. It proved them well as they cried, “our soul loatheth this light bread.” The words of Naaman’s servant are full of disclosure (v. 13). How true is his statement!

If God would just give men something *big* to do, they would do it because that *big* thing would redound to the ability and power of the man who did it, and salvation would be of debt and not of grace. Paul said the offense of the cross would cease if the preacher would give man something to do for salvation (Gal. 5:11<sup>1</sup>). Naaman would not have been offended if he had been given something to do—some grand gesture. He had brought with him the money to buy it and the clothing to cover it, and he meant to spend it to recover his health. He was offended because the requirement left *him* out of the equation. But the servant’s logic finally hit home; he relented to wise instruction, washed seven times in the Jordan and came again whole, hale, and hardy.

The first four words of verse 14 sums up the entire situation —“Then went he down.” This is the required direction of men. Christ must increase and I must decrease. When men get to the end of their rope, they have gone down, down to the dregs of despair, down to the slough of despond, to the dungeon like a quarry slave. The only way up for a sinner is down (1 Sam. 2:3-8<sup>2</sup>). The only way to live is to die. The only way to thrive is to falter, and the only way to be full is to be emptied.

One might say that Naaman did *do* something—*he* went

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<sup>1</sup> **Gal. 5:11**, And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

<sup>2</sup> **1 Sam. 2:3-8**, Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.

down, *he* washed in the Jordan. Indeed, *he* did just as a sinner that God has given faith believes. Belief is, in the final analysis, *submission* (Rom. 10:1-4<sup>1</sup>). There can be no doubt that Naaman, given his initial reaction to the command, submitted to it in the end.

One must also consider; this was done in the days of the Old Covenant, when blessing was conditioned upon obedience. Blessing is still conditioned upon obedience under the New Testament, but the difference is that obedience is accomplished by Christ and accounted to those for whom He obeyed (Phil. 2:8-11<sup>2</sup>). What Naaman did was typical and symbolic, and no type or symbol fully represents the substance. The power of this act is not in the act of submission but unto what he submitted. He submitted to washing in the Jordan as his only hope of recovery. It is the Jordan that presents the strongest type in this situation.

The Jordan is symbolic of one thing in scripture. It symbolizes what is necessary before entrance into the Promised Land or as to the matter of salvation, Immanuel's Land. The Promise Land, Immanuel's land is symbolic of salvation. The Jordan pictures death. Before anyone is saved, he must die, and not just any kind of death will do. It must be a perfect death because that is the only death that will satisfy God.

The fact that he washed seven times signifies *perfection*. The only perfect death is that death that accomplishes salvation. Naaman symbolically died when he washed in the Jordan seven times and the Jordan was the death he entered into. How

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<sup>1</sup> **Rom. 10:1-4**, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

<sup>2</sup> **Phil. 2:8-11**, And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

beautifully this pictures the elect sinner's salvation. Naaman was in Christ when Christ perfectly died unto God, and that death honored the law and satisfied justice. The result was that the sinner was clean every whit—"he was clean" (v. 14)—He was no longer a leper. He was not "started" on the road to recovery—He was immediately and summarily spotless, and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all iniquity. Naaman's washing is the saved sinner's *believing*.

*What follows salvation is true repentance.* Repentance is born of the *goodness* of God. It is the understanding of God's goodness in personal experience that leads a man to repentance. The goodness recognized is that God was gracious and that there was nothing in you to recommend you to Him. Some things here are typical of the effect of the saved sinner upon repentance.

*First, he returned to the man of God—the prophet* (v. 15). He did not go home to Syria; he came to the prophet. This pictures the believer returning to God, to Christ. Paul said that after God revealed Christ in him, "he conferred not with flesh and blood." He spent years with Christ being taught the gospel.

*Secondly, what was before considered as assets no longer held such significance.* Naaman came with gold and silver to pay for his recovery, but he gained salvation freely and fully in that which symbolized the death of Christ. Now what he has, he sees as belonging to God and wishes to use it as a blessing for the ministry of Elisha. Elisha refuses him because, in this scenario, he is the prophet, and pictures *the* Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, he does allow gifts to be given to his servant because he that preaches the gospel lives by the gospel he preaches. The offerings that Christ receives of His people are not payment for salvation. He paid that price alone in his blood. The gifts He receives are for the preaching of the gospel, the furtherance of His Kingdom and the care of the household of faith. Naaman's offering was for the amount of earth that two mules could carry to build an altar on which offering might be

made to the one true God (v. 17).

Some have conjectured that Naaman was superstitious and wanted to get the earth around Elisha's house because it was holy ground and would make a more suitable altar. That idea is not credible because this entire episode is preceded with his confession of faith (v. 15). Naaman attributed his complete recovery to the one true God, and in the last phrase of verse 17 and verse 18, he makes it clear where his heart is. Though the record of Naaman's words are in the present tense, he is speaking in the past tense asking that he might be pardoned for his former idolatry, having declared that he would only worship the true God henceforth (1 Thess. 1:9). Some of the marks of true repentance are confession that God's grace is your salvation alone; understanding that all you have is a gift of God; willing support of the gospel and the household of faith; refusing to worship the god you once worshipped and worshipping the only true and living God. None of these things precede salvation, they are results of salvation.



## RESPONSE OF FLESH

### 2 Kings 5:20-27

20, But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21, So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22, And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23, And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24, And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25, But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26, And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27, The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

**A**s we have studied the story of the healing of Naaman the Syrian, several great Bible truths have been revealed to us.

The first is a reminder of what we are. Naaman, though great and mighty, was ever to be remembered as Naaman the leper. It was not his achievements that defined him; it was his debilitating malady. This teaches us a stripping and humiliating truth. No matter what rung on the ladder of society or success we have attained, we are all defined by the same thing and in the same way. We are sinners. We may be wealthy sinners or poor sinners, educated sinners or illiterate sinners, weak sinner or strong sinners, law-abiding sinners or felonious sinners, healthy sinners or sick sinners, elect sinners or reprobate sinners, but we by nature, as born into this world, are defined by that one unifying and universal fact. We are sinners, and if God does not change our status, we will die as we have lived and enter eternity the sinner that we were born (John 8:24<sup>1</sup>). The best of society and the guttersnipe are but different versions of the same wretched thing. Before God, all respective résumés have but one all-defining description (Rom 3:10-23<sup>2</sup>). When our Lord referred to Naaman in Luke 4, though he was Naaman the visited, Naaman the cured, and Naaman the elect, he was grouped into the mass of putrefaction referred to as

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<sup>1</sup> **John 8:24**, I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom 3:10-23**, As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

“many lepers.”

From Luke 4 we also saw that Naaman was one of the elect, chosen in Christ before the world began. His election was *unto* salvation, which would be accomplished at the appointed time, in the appointed manner, and the elect will be informed of it not by the prophet but by the prophet's servant sent with the good news.

We have also seen that the flesh, no matter how diseased and helpless, always rejects the simplicity and singularity of the gospel. For salvation, the flesh must have something big and attractive. The flesh must be attended, stroked, and coddled by religion. It must have some part, some payment, some big display in the salvation of the soul.

We have seen that the elect leper, the elect sinner, was convinced not with grand oratory or some ornate stage show but with simple words. Visible things appeal to the flesh, while the singular word of salvation addresses faith.

We saw Naaman obey the prophet and enter symbolic death in the river Jordan, picturing every sinner that is given faith to believe Christ, that salvation *is* Christ, and to believe Him is to *reckon* that you died in the death of Christ. We saw that faith was attended with “repentance from dead works and idols to serve the living God.” The entire chapter to this point is plainly and clearly a typification and picture of *the* Christ dealing with and saving a ruined and helpless sinner.

Here, as we come to the close of this chapter, we are confronted with the reaction of flesh to salvation by grace.

Gehazi had seen it all. He had been the one to tell Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan. He had seen the leper come out of the waters with skin as fine as a newborn babe. He had seen the attitude of Naaman changed as he sought to build an altar to the living God. He had seen Elisha refuse the gifts of Naaman showing that the gift of God is by grace and not by a mercenary exchange between God and men.

Verse 20 is an entrance into the machinations of the mind

of the flesh as it considers salvation by grace; Gehazi is thinking and talking with himself. The flesh simply cannot wrap its mind around the salvation that costs men nothing and does not somehow equate to profit. There is a reason why men call the church an *organization* rather than an *organism*, a business rather than a body. The flesh must see profit and be able to handle it, taste it and touch it. This verse, since I first read it many years ago, has always intrigued me. It is a simple proof that the mind of the flesh understands what grace means yet rejects it out of hand. I am weary of the consummate liars who claim ignorance or confusion about grace and the doctrine that attends it. They *do* understand, and what they understand inflames their indignation. They understand what grace means, but they want none of it because it utterly removes them and their works, supposed righteousness, and worldly gain from the equation of salvation. They know what it means, but they cannot swallow it—grace induces their gag reflex.

The first part of Gehazi's thoughts reveal that *he knows* what grace means, and a simple perusal shows a sweet aspect of sovereign grace though to Gehazi it seems wrong and ill advised. Taken just at face value, we see that the enemies of the gospel, in their hate and malice, often declare the gospel much like those at the cross who disdainfully cried “he saved others, himself he cannot save.” In doing so, they unknowingly declared the glory of substitution. Gehazi, with disdain for “this Syrian,” declares that grace is for the sinners that God has chosen to salvation. Likewise, his thoughts reveal that the flesh presumes to know the kind of person that is a candidate for salvation, and in this case, it is certainly not “this Syrian.”

Look at the entire first phrase of verse 20, and see the story of your salvation. Put you name in the place of Naaman. “Behold my master hath spared Naaman, this Syrian, in not receiving at his hand that which he brought.” The old hymn says, “Nothing in my hand I bring,” but truth be told, before God gave us faith, we thought we had plenty to offer.

You and I were spared in God not receiving anything at our hand. Had he required something of us, then salvation would be of debt and not grace. God spared us by refusing anything we had. We would have gladly paid, but God spared us by refusing us. Gehazi knew this, saying it plainly and clearly, but he did not like it that way because possible gain had been removed from his arithmetic. He saw wealth and station riding off in the sunset, and the wonder of grace was eclipsed with lust for lucre.

He utters a horrid oath; his carnal mind having incited his ludicrous heart. What he said and what followed in his deeds was not irreligious; it was carnal religion at its core. “As the Lord liveth” or “As God is my witness, I will get some gold for the salvation of this Syrian. This man's recovery will be gain to me. I will play on this Syrian's thankfulness and gratitude to rip him off.” Grace begets graciousness and religion seeks to profit —“I will take somewhat of him.” John Gill said the Hebrew word here translated “somewhat” is missing a letter and means a “blot” suggesting that this was a blot against Gehazi.

How can he approach Naaman who has understood the grace that has been shown him? The only way is to lie, and the lie must be appealing to the new heart of this man; the heart that has been tenderized by God; the heart thankful for free grace; the heart that knows that all he has belongs to God. Gehazi decides on the “poor little preacher” ruse. It still works today and is used prolifically and successfully in separating men from the contents of their wallets. Philanthropic shams abound in our day (vv. 21-23.). Gehazi had designs on becoming lord of a large estate.

After hiding the loot, Gehazi came to Elisha, and as God addressed Adam in the garden, the prophet Elisha asked where he had been, all the while knowing the answer because he knew Gehazi. Gehazi is forced to build upon his previous lie. But his lies were but confessions to the prophet who, like Peter knew the heart of Simon Magus, knew the heart of Gehazi. Gehazi

had wanted what Naaman *had*, and he got it in spades! He not only got silver and a new wardrobe, but he also got Naaman's leprosy. Be careful what you ask for. You just might get it.

The sentence was gruesome. Gehazi was made leprous and though its extent of “white as the snow” offered hope to the leper in general (e.g., Miriam, Isa. 1:18<sup>1</sup>), the leprosy added to Gehazi is without remedy and will be passed from generation to generation.

The lesson we may all take from this in its most concise form is simply this. God's grace in Christ is his glory, and He will not give it to another. Let men toy with minor theological things of indifference, but toy with grace on pain of death.

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 1:18**, Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

# SWIMMING IRON

## 2 Kings 6:1-7

1, And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2, Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3, And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4, So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5, But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

6, And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

7, Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

**H**ere we have yet another miracle at the hand of the prophet Elisha. A miracle is a miracle because the elements of it cannot be accomplished by natural means. A miracle is something that there is no rational, humanly logical explanation for how it took place. Here an iron axe head is made to swim. There is simply no explanation for this save that it is a miracle. If *we* had seen such a thing, we would have stood with our mouths agape and our countenance askance. Miracles are not for explaining; they are about awe and stopping men in their tracks in order to confront their own inability and turn their eyes to God.

Miracles are not happenstance. They do not pop up willy-

nilly, and they do not rely on circumstance, nor are they a way of fixing something. They are *ordained* and fall within the realm of God's providential dealing with His people to show forth the glories of His person and purpose in the salvation of the elect. All the elements that surround the losing and recovering of this ax head took place for the loss and recovery of the ax head. The ax head was lost so that it would be found. Where and how it was lost was ordained so that the manner of its recovery could only be attributed to supernatural power and qualify as a miraculous act of God.

The story runs thus. After the departure of the leprous Gehazi, and perhaps because of it, the number of students in the prophet's school had grown. The school of prophets was not a seminary but a place, usually the prophet's house, where young men gathered to be taught by the prophet and instructed in the things of God. One cannot be taught to be a prophet any more than one can be taught to be a preacher. If, among these young men, one was ordained to be a prophet, it was an appointment made before the world began (Jer. 1:4-5<sup>1</sup>). If he had attended instruction at the feet of the prophet, it would serve him in understanding, but would have nothing to do with his calling.

At this time the school had outgrown its facilities, and one of the students approaches Elisha and seeks his approval to move the school to the Jordan where there was an abundance of trees to build a school large enough to house the growing number of students. This is evidenced by the words used in the original language. The word "dwell" (v. 2) is normally interpreted "where we sit," and indicates the practice of sitting at the feet of the prophet. "With thee" (v. 1) suggests that Elisha was the teacher. Verse 2 shows us the respect and reverence these young men had for the prophet. "We pray thee"

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 1:4-5, Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.



is a plea that indicates that these young men would not do this without the clear approval of Elisha.

Not only did they seek his approval, but likewise sought his presence (v. 3: Ex. 33:12-17<sup>1</sup>). It is also clear that these young men were of one accord and one mind and equally involved in this endeavor—“Take every man a beam.” So, the prophet and his students went to Jordan and started logging (v. 4). As one young student was felling a tree, the ax head was loosed from the handle and fell in the murky depths of the Jordan. The young man was beside himself with anxiety because the ax was not his—“it was borrowed” (v. 5). One rendering of “it was borrowed” is “Ah master, it is sought,” suggesting that he had looked for it but could not find it.

The prophet asked where it fell and after he was shown the location, the prophet instructed the student to cut off a limb and cast it in the water where the ax head had fallen. Then, in matter-of-fact language, we are told that the “iron did swim.” This matter-of-fact language continues in verse 7 as the young man was told to pick the iron out of the water. He did so and the story ends without record of fanfare or shock and awe. I believe the lack of hyperbolic language does not discount the probability of amazement and wonder but suggests that as believers, these young men knew the source of the recovery because Elisha had been used of the Lord in several miracles. The story ends there.

The commentaries I read dealt with the story well and accounted that it was a miracle—a wonder—and according to

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 33:12-17, And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

who you read, placed emphasis of several different aspects of the story. What I did not find in my search for help was a clear presentation of Christ and Him crucified. I have mulled this over for several weeks, reading it several times looking for what I knew was there, a typification of Christ and His work in the salvation of sinners.

I have been accused over the years of over typifying and looking for Christ in every passage of scripture. To this accusation I confess that I am guilty, and I cannot seem to help myself. I do, however, have it on sound authority that this pursuit is reasonable and worthwhile. Our Lord said that this book was about Him, and when he spoke those words, there was nothing written but the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39). In this passage are words, phrases, and employment of specific tools of language that declare the gospel and the miracle of salvation.

First, there is a *picture of the church*. It is expanding and in need of a larger place to meet and be taught. Note that this occurs out of necessity, not out of church planting. They did not say to the prophet, "Let's build a big ole' building and invent ways to fill it." The word being taught by the prophet had resulted in more young men showing up to hear. It is the Lord that adds to the church "daily them that should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

Secondly, we have another aspect of the church in that these young men as well as the prophet *were of one mind*, to build a place where they all could gather and be taught the word of God. The church is where you will find *The Prophet*—the Lord Jesus Christ. When John saw Christ revealed on the Isle of Patmos, he first saw the seven candlesticks and Christ in the midst of them. Our Lord said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20)

Then there are these words in this passage: "iron," "lost," "fell," "Jordan," "trees," "found," and a dead thing made alive. It

takes no stretch of the imagination for a believer to see that *these words apply to the gospel*. We will look at them in no particular chronology but rather in terms of the story of salvation.

First, we have the description of the ax head as *iron*. Iron is from the earth. Though it is found in many environments and materials, it is found in the dirt of the earth, and to go from the element of ferrite, it must be taken from the earth and formed by skilled hands to eventuate into the product iron. Man was formed from the elements of the earth and made a human being. Iron is often used in language to metaphorically describe hardness, coldness, obstinacy, and intractability. These are all elements of the character, psychology, and psychopathy of rebellious humanity. Iron also comes to its singularity in a forge, formed by fire and heat. Humanity came to be what it was in the fires of judgment against sin in the garden. Finally, iron is inanimate, without life—it is not a living thing!

Secondly, the iron ax head was *lost in a fall*. So was all humanity lost in the fall of Adam.

Thirdly, the iron fell into the Jordan, symbolic of death. Man, when he fell, died spiritually, began to die physically, and is described as dead in trespasses and sin.

Fourthly, the *iron was lost*. It is a true thing that the value of a thing grows exponentially when it cannot be found. There arises an urgency when we lose something and cannot find it. This urgency may be seen in the words of our Lord as he said He would leave the ninety and nine and search for his lost sheep till he found it (Matt 18:12-13).

The one who lost the iron knew where it had fallen; it was enwrapped in *death* at the bottom of the Jordan. The young man called out to the prophet for help. He could not find it or retrieve it himself, and if it was to be found, God must do the finding. How often have mothers and fathers cried out in despair for God to find and recover their child lost in death and sin!

The prophet goes to the place where the iron was lost, and does a thing that cannot be discerned by human logic. He does not drag the river with grappling hooks, or reroute the waters, or simply call on the iron to come up out of the deep. He cuts down a stick. The word “stick” is actually “tree.” He cuts down a tree. Our Lord is often referred to as a tree in the scripture (Gen. 3:24; Ps. 1:1-3; Rev. 22:1-2; Luke 23:27-31<sup>1</sup>). And was He not cut down? He was “cut off from the land of the living” (Isa. 53:8). Daniel prophesied that the “Messiah shall be cut off but not for himself” (Dan. 9:26). Could this tree not also represent His cross, or his crucifixion? Where was the tree cast? It was cast into the Jordan, into *death*, and that by the Prophet himself. Did our Lord not, by himself, enter into death and die in the room and stead of His elect (Heb. 2:14-16<sup>2</sup>)?

The result is sweetly declared—“The iron did swim” (v. 6). The word “swim” gives this inanimate, hard, cold, lifeless thing characteristics of animation. Swimming is activity—living activity! The language declares the iron to *live*. What a thing!

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<sup>1</sup> **Gen. 3:24**, So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

**Ps. 1:1-3**, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

**Rev. 22:1-2**, And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

**Luke 23:27-31**, And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

<sup>2</sup> **Heb. 2:14-16**, Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Christ and Him crucified gives life to dead sinners!

Finally, the one to whom the lost iron was so important is told, “Take it up to thee” (v. 7). The saved sinner is given to the church that he might be used for what he was made. To the widow of Nain, Christ returned her son after He raised him from the dead. To the family of Lazarus our Lord said, “Loose him and let him go.” To Jairus, after He had raised his daughter, Christ said, “Give her something to eat.” “Take it up to thee,” and “he...took it.”

Swimming iron—lost sinner saved. To God be the glory!



# SAFE

## 2 Kings 6:8-23

8, Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

9, And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

10, And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11, Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

12, And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13, And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

14, Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15, And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16, And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

17, And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the

mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

18, And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19, And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20, And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

21, And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?

22, And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

23, And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

**T**his is one of those passages in the Word of God that is of comfort for the believer as it sets forth the fact that the believers are kept by the power of God. No weapon formed against them shall prosper. The enemies of the cross are everywhere in the world. We know from the words of the Lord that they hate Him, and it should not come as any surprise that they hate the believer also (John 15:18<sup>1</sup>). Their true enmity is toward Christ, but He is not here. He is enthroned in glory having finished the salvation of the elect. Their enmity, therefore, is transferred to those who march under His banner

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<sup>1</sup> **John 15:18**, If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.



and preach in His name. They cannot get to Christ, so their animosity is aimed at the believer.

These verses contain the record of the enemies of the cross scheming against the king of Israel, and when that plot was thwarted, turning their animosity toward the prophet of God. We can see immediately that these incidents mirror the words of our Lord, “Marvel not that they hate you, they hated me also.” This story is a help to me, and since we are all sinners saved by grace, cut from the same cloth, I think it will be a help and encouragement to you. Rather than deal with this expositionally, we look at each incident in this story for the lesson it has for us.

It begins with the king of Syria warring (plotting war) against Israel. As we have already seen, this is the enmity against the believer and his King. When I read the words in verse 8, my mind immediately went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm and the rhetorical question, “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?” The king of Syria knew well of the power of the God of Israel. His right-hand man, the captain of his host, had been cleansed of leprosy, and no doubt the fame of God and His prophet had been spread abroad throughout the land. What would make a reasonable man think that he can war against a people who serve such a Sovereign? “What fools these mortals be!”

The first lesson learned is that *unbelief carries with it a degree of insanity*, especially when it has been confronted with the power of God. Another fact is that unbelief can never believe. Unbelief is a state of mind, spirit, and being. It is bent one way and cannot change. It will always operate according to the dictates of its nature. This is how men, when confronted with the undeniable truth of the gospel, can turn a blind eye and depart in unbelief. They *will* not believe because they *cannot* believe. They *cannot* believe because they *will* not believe. So, in blatant unbelief, the king of Syria plots to go against the people of Israel when reasonable thought and logic would prevent it,

but unbelief demands it. The enmity of the carnal mind cannot but rebel against God, even in the face of sure defeat.

In verses 9-10, there is another lesson. We see *the plans and schemes of this king frustrated by the word of God*, through the prophet Elisha. It is apparent that many plans were thwarted, but rather than give up and go home, the king of Syria just came up with other plots (v. 10). Verse 11 reveals an innate trait of unbelief. It is *suspicion*. The king of Syria immediately suspects that there is a traitor in the camp. Once again, he does not allow that his failure might be due to the God of the people he plots against. The element of insanity is obvious.

The next lesson is seen in verse 12. Though the accusation is against Elisha, it is Elisha's God who is omniscient. Again, unbelief comes to the fore. How can a man know the thoughts and intents of the heart? Man's realm is restricted to the realm of behavior, and though behavior, to some degree, reveals the heart, it is not always the case. But God is omniscient, and nothing is hid from him. We all have secrets, things that we alone know about ourselves, but our thoughts, even to the words upon our tongues before we speak, are before God as an open book (Heb. 4 12-13<sup>1</sup>). Even in his bedchamber, in his waking thoughts and his dreams, the king of Syria's thoughts were as a herald unto God. As he thought where he would hide in wait, Elisha was made aware of it, and time and time again the king was disappointed. It is not comfortable to consider that nothing about us is hid from God, but it is of great comfort to know that all our sins in thought, word and deed are washed in the blood of the Lamb and remembered no more.

Verses 13-17 contain some of the most encouraging words in the Word of God. The armies of Syria are gathered against *one man*. The king of Syria believes that to do away with the

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<sup>1</sup> **Heb. 4 12-13**, For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

prophet will be an end to the people of Israel and respectively—their God. I wonder what expense had been committed to this campaign. Every effort has failed and now the king seeks to kill the messenger. He takes his host to Dothan and surrounds the city. Elisha's servant goes out to get things ready for the day and sees this multitude in battle array and knows that he and the prophet are gone. He flies to his master and cries, “how shall we do, or how shall we get out of this mess?” (v. 15). The reply from Elisha is classic. “Don't worry, there are more of us than there are of them” (v. 16). Elisha then prays that his servant's eyes would be opened, not his natural yes, but his eyes of faith and mind. And when his eyes were opened, he saw that he and Elisha were surrounded by an impenetrable angelic wall—chariots of fire like those that had taken Elijah to heaven.

Much is said of angels today, but little is truly known of their function. They are guardians of the elect from cradle to grave (Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10<sup>1</sup>). You and I may see them in human form and be unaware that they are what they are. It is by faith that we know this; the armies of men and the demons of hell cannot come near us save to serve our good and for God's glory. Lord, open our eyes (Job. 1:10<sup>2</sup>).

Finally, we see *justice tempered with mercy*. Elisha asks the Lord to blind the eyes of the army of Syria as they came down the hill—and the Lord did it (v. 18). Elisha spoke to them, but they did not know it was Elisha. They were blind. This was not a Jedi mind trick. Elisha simply told the blind men that they were headed the wrong way by saying, “the man you seek is not here but follow me and I will lead you to him” (v. 19; 1 Thes. 1:6). Elisha took them to Samaria, to the midst of the camp of Israel. Then the Lord opened their eyes to see where they were

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<sup>1</sup> **Heb. 1:14**, Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

**Matt. 18:10**, Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> **Job. 1:10**, Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

and the army of Israel, but not the host of heaven. They were not theirs to see. The king of Israel could only surmise that they were delivered to him that he might slay them, but showing respect for Elisha, he asks if he should kill this army—his sworn enemy. Elisha answers that he should *not* kill them but to make a feast for them and send them home. This army had seen and were made blind; were blind and now they see; and what they see is their sure demise. But mercy sets for them a feast and sends them on their way. Sounds like graciousness to me (John 9:40).

The last phrase of verse 23 speaks to a span of time rather than a permanent thing. The very next verse reveals that unbelief is not dead in the king of Syria's heart. Despite all that he has seen and experienced, he cannot believe. He must continue to hate God until he dies or until he is made to see what cannot be seen (2 Cor. 4:18<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 4:18, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## DESPAIR AND DEPRAVITY

### 2 Kings 6:24-33

24, And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25, And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

26, And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

27, And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

28, And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

29, So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

30, And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.

31, Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

32, But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold

him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

33, And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

**T**his passage is so jamb-packed with the human condition that just perusing it overwhelms the mind. The despair is such that it makes general poverty seem a worthy pursuit. The prodigal who desired the swine's husks for food would have been, by comparison, a most fortunate person, a rich man for the quality of the food he had before him (Luke 15:16<sup>1</sup>). The entire episode is a display of despair and depravity. The major players in the display of depravity are Jehoram, king in Israel, and Benhadad, king in Syria.

In verse 24, Benhadad lays siege against Israel. A siege is a kind of warfare designed to starve out the enemy by closing supply lines and waiting for the attrition to grow to the place that the starving enemy will finally surrender because he has no ability to continue (Lam. 4:9<sup>2</sup>). Whether the siege brought about the famine or the famine attended the siege is not clearly stated, but underlying and overruling the entire matter is the providence of God. When punishment is delayed, the minds of men are set to continue in their evil.

This world, because it has not seen the Lord's return, has convinced itself that our Lord's second coming is a myth. They have no knowledge of the patience of the Lord or His will to endure the vessels that He has made to destroy, in bringing into His fold every vessel he has ordained for mercy and honor. Benhadad is doomed. His appointed day of death is set. He will receive the sentence at precisely the moment that God has

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<sup>1</sup> **Luke 15:16**, And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.

<sup>2</sup> **Lam. 4:9**, They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.

ordained. But Benhadad believes he has escaped the wrath of God, and the times that temporal mercy has been shown him have not tenderized his heart toward God and His people.

First, Benhadad received mercy at the hands of Ahab when he approached Ahab with a rope around his neck crying; “We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings” (1 Kings 20:31). Playing on Ahab's considerable ego, he was set free though Ahab was in direct disobedience to God's command for Ahab to kill Benhadad.

Secondly, God blinded his entire army, and instead of being relieved of their heads, they were fed a feast and led home in peace.

Twice, Benhadad had not met the punishment that fit his crimes, and these temporal mercies are counted by him to be a weakness in Israel and their God. Instead of thanksgiving and praise, his cold heart is further steeled against Israel. When life is spared from what seems to be imminent ruin, there is a reason why we refer to it as a close call. It is a call which God suffers many to disregard to their ultimate destruction (Eccl. 8:11; 2 Pet. 3:1-9<sup>1</sup>). This entire episode is but another nail in Benhadad's coffin. The wheels of justice grind slow, but they grind exceeding small. For now, the siege is working, but soon the Lord will, with sound of fury, scatter the Syrian soldiers in

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<sup>1</sup> **Eccl. 8:11**, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

**2 Pet. 3:1-9**, This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

fear without a shot being fired. God suffers Benhadad to fill his evil and plumb further the depths of his depravity until that day when he looks to draw the next breath, and it is not there to be had. Benhadad's heart is in the Lord's hands and is turned whithersoever the Lord has pleased.

As for Jehoram, it is not said that he did not make a siege store in preparation for the possibility of attack, but it is clear that the famine, either caused by or in concert with the siege, cannot be separated from Jehoram following in the footsteps of his father, Ahab. He is a hapless, helpless, idolatrous king just as his father was. The despair of his nation is seen in its abject poverty. There was silver, and there was gold, but there was no food. An ass's head was worth its weight in gold. This was forbidden food as it was an unclean beast. Starvation rules the mind. The six eggshells full (one fourth a cab) of dove's dung was of premium value (v. 25). The commentators are so scattered as to whether this dung was for food or for burning, or even if it was really dove's dung, that I think it best to look at it in the context of starvation and see it representative of those who were starving but had not crossed the threshold of those described in verses 26-29. Praise God for His love (Isa. 49:15<sup>1</sup>). We cannot wrap our minds around this.

Note the king's cavalier response to this woman's plea (v. 27). We speak of humble beginnings and being brought up poor, but this kind of dire penury we cannot imagine. But this is the extremity realized as a result of the judgment of God. This siege, famine, and these results are prophecy fulfilled (Deut. 28:45-48<sup>2</sup>). The Lord knows the depravity of the heart.

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 49:15**, Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

<sup>2</sup> **Deut. 28:45-48**, Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things:



Jehoram followed in the idolatry of his father and now the promise of judgment that came to Israel has come true. This famine and siege is God's doing (Amos 3:6<sup>1</sup>). This scene is too much for the king.

Jehoram rent his clothes and put on sackcloth. Sackcloth is symbolic of *mourning*, and usually it is mourning brought about by repentance. But this sackcloth is a *sham*. The rending of the clothing is what really reveals the mind of the king. Rending is a sign of despair as well as anger and disgust. The king's reaction is anger toward God. Such anger is usually carried by the idea that injustice has been done. The king felt that God was punishing *him* unjustly, even though it was precisely what he brought upon himself. He could not get to God, but he thought he could get to Elisha, and planned to have his head on a pike. Jehoram was not wrong to attribute this famine to God, and his response should have been that of reverence that brought a prayer for mercy to his wicked tongue. But he hated God, and he thought as men do—that he could frustrate and thwart God. But the potsherds of the earth ought to keep their battles with their fellow potsherds (Isa. 45:9<sup>2</sup>). Raging against God is laughable vanity, but it is the ultimate end of depravity. Men praise God or blame and accuse him. If they praise God, it is by grace. If they hate him, it is by nature.

The man of God, by the spirit of prophecy, knows Jehoram's plot (v. 32). He called the king "the son of a murderer." He is referring to Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, who had Naboth killed. Elisha knew that the king would follow close behind the messenger, so he had the elders block the door. Though it appears that verse 33 records the words of the messenger, this oath in the last phrase of the verse is, if not

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and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

<sup>1</sup> **Amos 3:6**, Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

<sup>2</sup> **Isa. 45:9**, Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Jehoram's *voice*, his *words*. In this, we see the extent of depravity as it dictates the voice of nature. Though we have not heard these words in the king's English, we have heard this sentiment expressed by many who have experienced loss or witnessed some tragedy. It is the pat response of the unbeliever. "If God is like that, I want nothing to do with Him. How could a loving God do this?"

However, these are the words of one who *claims* to be a child of God. Often those who profess Christ are quick to desert their profession when they are suddenly confronted with the sovereignty of God. Barnard said, "If you think God is a monster, get ready to meet a monster." The words of the king are born of arrogant hatred—"God did this, he hasn't relented, and I'm not going to have anything to do with Him again." This is a suggestion that God's dealing is a quid pro quo exchange. Further, it is a suggestion that he had sought God, though he clearly had not. He believed as all depraved human nature does, that God existed for him, and when God did not do as he was supposed to, He was no longer needed.

It is far better to bow and confess our sin and say from a convinced heart—"It is the LORD, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight," because that is how it is.

# BOUNTY FOR THE HOPELESS

## 2 Kings 7:1-11

1, Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

2, Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

3, And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4, If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5, And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

6, For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7, Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

8, And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went

and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

9, Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

10, So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

11, And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.

**T**he primary attribute of the sinner that comes to Christ is that he has a great need, need that is born of desolation and ruin. When Hannah spake of the Lord in terms of killing and making alive, of making hungry and filling, she was not merely stating facts, but setting forth the method, the manner, and the course of grace (1 Sam. 2 7-8<sup>1</sup>). The most stripping doctrine in the Scripture is the doctrine of God's grace. Before He bestows grace, He will bring the recipient to know that he has nothing, is nothing, and can do nothing.

Before us, in this record of these four *leprous* men, we have the picture of grace abounding to the worst of mankind—the diseased, the cursed, the pariah, the unwanted, and the unwashed. This is always the case, perhaps to varying degrees, but nonetheless it is the method of grace. The four lepers were Jews, and though they had to remain outside the gates of the city, they were victims of the siege and the desolation that attended it. Like the multitudes within the city, they were

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 2 7-8, The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

starving and on the brink of death, and they knew it. They were what the theologians called “sensible sinners” that, through the hand of providence, had nothing to lay hold of but the cruel and rightful death that awaited them. Many die in their sin without any sensibility of their estate, and though their case is just as dire, they have been blinded to feeling sense. These lepers were doubly cognizant of their plight.

First, they were, by innate disease, unwelcome in the halls of polite society. They must go about warning men of their ruin, casting dirt into the air and crying, “unclean, unclean” lest someone draw nigh and is infected. They must wear a cloth over their mouth lest their exhalations pollute the atmosphere of those around them.

Secondly, they were *sure* for death, as good as dead, “without hope,” and “without help” in the world (Eph. 2:12). Though their condition and circumstance mirrors the debilitating effect of sin and is worthy of the wrath due sin, grace informs the view of them not in anger but pity.

I want us to consider these lepers in three ways.

### 1. What they did not know.

First, *they did not know* the Lord had routed and put their enemies on the run. They had suffered much at the hand of the Syrians. In every case where God delivers his people, two things take place. The first is the destruction of their enemies. Now, it does not seem so because there is no natural indication that the siege of sin has ended. We are troubled on every side from within and without. But faith overcomes that knowledge because the word has assured us that the serpent's head has been bruised and no weapon formed against us shall prosper. Faith transcends circumstance because it is based on what God has *said*, not on what we *see*. These lepers feared they would die if they stayed and *surely* die if they entered the camp of the enemy, but what they did not know was that God had already taken care of that item on the agenda (v. 6.)

Second, *they did not know* that because God had destroyed their enemy, great bounty and wealth was already procured for them. “Handfuls on purpose,” “pressed down and running over,” a cornucopia of blessing awaited their arrival (Ruth 2:16; Luke 6:38<sup>1</sup>). In short, they did not know what God had *done*. They had no idea as they awaited the grim reaper, that their salvation had *been* accomplished, and *God* had accomplished it. They did not know of the prophet's words that on this very day the nourishment and blessing that they would have paid anything for, even their life to possess, had been freely secured for them. The table had been set and the feast had been laid out—the feast of “fat things, wine on the lees and well refined” (v. 1; Isa. 25:6<sup>2</sup>). What a sweet picture of the gospel this is. It is the declaration of what God has *done*—what he has *finished*.

## 2. What they did know.

They knew that they were dead men. They knew whether they entered the sieged city or stayed where they were, or even if they ventured to the camp of the enemy, their life was not worth spit (v. 4). What will a dying man do?—whatever it takes to possibly avoid death. The camp of the enemy had the one thing that they needed to live, and sink or swim, hunger drove them to drastic measures. It has been said that a drowning man will grasp at a straw for support. What these starving lepers had was a need so desperate that even the face of the enemy was not a consideration. What will a dying, starving, spiritually emaciated sinner do to get to Christ—he'll come against the very gates of hell, discount family, friends, former religion, anything and everything that stands between him and his need

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<sup>1</sup> **Ruth 2:16**, And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

**Luke 6:38**, Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

<sup>2</sup> **Isa. 25:6**, And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

being met. You won't have to give an invitation or come up with a simple plan. Just get out of the way! “The kingdom of God suffered violence and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

The poet wrote:

“I'll go to Jesus though my sin  
Hath like a mountain rose:  
I know His courts, I'll enter in.  
Whatever may oppose.”

“I'll to the gracious King approach.  
Whose scepter pardon gives:  
Perhaps he may command my touch.  
And them the suppliant lives.”

“Perhaps he will admit my plea:  
Perhaps will hear my prayer;  
But if I perish. I will pray.  
And perish only there.”

“I can but perish if I go:  
I am resolved to try:  
For if I stay away  
I know I must for ever die”

“But if I die with mercy sought.  
When I the King have tried  
This were to die (delightful thought !)  
As sinner never died.”

They knew they were twice doomed and if they died, they would die trying to get to where the food was.

### 3. What did they do?

They went to where the food was. Driven by hunger, driven

by need, and guided by grace they dragged themselves with their waning energy, as dead men walking, into the jaws of death. When they arrived at the edge of the encampment, the Word is simply and beautifully precise—"there was no man there." There was no enemy to oppose, no man where they might have to announce their malady—no man. All that was there was gracious plenty (v. 5). What did they do when they saw the bounty? They filled their belly and stocked their caches (v. 8). What else would a sinner do when he comes to Christ but partake of the bounty? What would a dying man do when there is nothing but abundant life before him but seek to secure a future? Was it thievery to take and hide the gold, silver and provender? It is thievery to lay up treasures in heaven? Is it thievery to fill your coffer with what you find? It is not thievery because God has said to His people "all things are yours" (1 Cor. 3:22).

Nature dictates a love for self, but the Spirit dictates that though the bounty is yours and nothing necessary is withheld, to not report the bounty is ill conceived (v. 9). What did they do? They told it out! They broadcast it to the people! They went to the gates of the city and cried aloud of the destruction of the enemy and the bounty that was there for the taking (vv. 10-11)! They feared sitting on the good news (v. 9). Today was a day of good tidings. Will a fat and fed sinner fear consequences if he remains silent about the abundance of grace? Hear the words of Paul, "For though I preach the gospel. I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: woe is unto me. if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

“There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins  
and sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
lose all their guilty stains.



Ere since by faith I saw that stream,  
thy flowing wounds supply:  
redeeming love has been my theme  
and shall be till I die.”

*(Based on Zech. 13:1 - William Cowper)*



## CARNAL SUSPICION

### 2 Kings 7:12-20

12, And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

13, And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see.

14, They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.

15, And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.

16, And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

17, And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

18, And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:

19, And that lord answered the man of God, and said,

Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

20, And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

**T**hese verses record the response of the king of Israel to the good tidings that the four lepers brought. Their message was simple. The siege was *over!* The enemy had fled and left all they owned, save for the clothes on their backs. All that Israel had to do was go and gather the spoils, and not only end their starvation, but gain much more than they lost in the months of woe. This is the theme of the gospel! What we lost in Adam was returned to us with much more (Rom. 5).

The lepers gave a true report of great bounty and all of it free for the taking. This was no foreign message to the people of God. It was the promise that God gave concerning the Promised Land (Deut. 6:10-11; 8:7-9<sup>1</sup>). Likewise, this is the declaration of the gospel. God has freely given His people all things in Christ. No good thing is withheld from them. The declaration that the war is over and the victory is yours through Christ is the *consolation* of true Israel (Isa. 40:1-5<sup>2</sup>). The concept

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<sup>1</sup> **Deut. 6:10-11**, And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full.

**8:7-9**, For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

<sup>2</sup> **Isa. 40:1-5**, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

of free grace—absolutely free—does not sit well with the carnal nature of the flesh. The old man cannot grasp the idea of grace, much less the principle of gain without personally meriting it.

A free thing has no strings attached, no condition to be met, no mitigating circumstance to negate it, and no reason for it, save in the one who exercises grace. The carnal mind reasons that there must be something that caused this bounty, and since the carnal mind cannot perceive spiritual truth, it immediately looks to self to find reason for the abundance. The natural man, because of love for self, will venture into the minefield of his delusions of goodness, the power of his will, and the value of his person to reach the conclusion that he deserves this. Under the Old Covenant this is reasonable since the blessings of the covenant were conditioned on obedience. The fact that men refuse the concept of free grace under the preaching of the gospel is simply a reminder that the religion of men is that of works for reward. Free grace is conditioned upon obedience but not that of the recipient. It is conditioned upon the perfect obedience rendered by the sovereign substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is also another response to the principle of free grace. The carnal mind becomes suspicious. Something for nothing simply does not wash. This is the case with the king of Israel (v. 12). He knows something about himself. He knows that he has followed in the idolatrous footsteps of his fathers. He knows that he has disowned and discounted the worship of the true and living God. He knows that he has dishonored God, and now, such a report of free and abundant blessing causes the carnal mind to think that something sinister is afoot. As Shakespeare said, “Conscience makes cowards of us all.” The king knew that the siege was a result of the people’s idolatry, and for the life of him, he could not see this abundance as anything less than a conspiracy to do him in (v. 12). Think of the many who hear the gospel, the good news of a finished work for salvation, and all the manifold mercies and gifts that

attend it, and yet say in their heart, "This can't be so."

The driving force of freewill religion is the belief that there must be reasonable worthiness to receive the blessing of God. This notion gives the power to men and makes God obliged to His creatures, and grace falls to the realm of carnal reasoning. It boils down to the fact that the unbeliever cannot believe the promise of God, even when it is fulfilled in his ears. The prophet had informed the king's servant of what God had promised (7:1). He did not believe but will soon find that the prophet was true, and his unbelief will be revealed to all.

The king's servant had heard the good tidings and had not been able to persuade the king, but because of their aching bellies and the plight that continued, they did not give up (v. 13). Only five horses remained in the city. The rest of them had been eaten, and these also would have been had they not been part of the king's stable. The king was persuaded to hook two of his best horses to a chariot and to go see if this thing told by the lepers was true. He sent men out to search, and they went all the way to Jordan, finding along the way the spoils of an enemy defeated by God. God had sent fear into the hearts of the enemy to the degree that they carried nothing with them save the clothes on their backs (v. 15).

When the people went out to gather these goods, they realized the promise of God whether they knew of it or not. What they did know was that before them was a bounty that they did not earn yet was freely there for the taking. Their bellies and their coffers would be filled, and what just hours before had been a priceless commodity was now worth considerably less due to supply and demand. However, the king and the servant that he had sent to Elisha knew the promise of God had been fulfilled.

The servant who had heard the promise was appointed to watch the gate and to keep order, and he saw the fulfillment of the promise with a vengeance. Elijah had told him that he

would see the bounty but would not taste of it (7:2<sup>1</sup>). He was trampled underfoot by the hungry hordes seeking to fill their needs (v. 17). How plain and pure this account is. If men need Christ, do not seek to measure their response or control their behavior. Just get out of their way or be trampled underfoot.

Perhaps the king and his servant fancied themselves the keepers of the promise and sought to devise a simple plan to disperse the blessings according to whom they felt was deserving. But want, need, and necessity rule the day of salvation, and these are the only warrant needed for the desperate.

Can the wildest imagination come up with an idea of an invitation in this scenario? False religion's invitation is designed to appeal to the will of man, the ersatz power of man to accept or reject some notion of an offer. Would any hungry man need to "make a decision" whether or not to fill his belly? The notion that there was a choice involved is ludicrous and would only stand if there were no need involved but just a choice between options. "Let's see. I'm starving to death. Should I eat or exercise my will to die when the bounty is right in front of me?" The gospel is not an offer, and it is not an invitation, both of which can be disregarded if there is no need or necessity involved. Christ did not come to call the righteous but to *bring sinners to repentance*. The righteous have no needs, but ruined, helpless, starving sinners have nothing but need, and by any and all means they will come with all speed to where the food is.

The servant of the king lay dead, summarily squashed as promised. The people are fed as promised, and the king has witnessed it all. What he learned was that the word of God is pure and truth. The prophet assured the king of this immutable fact. What God says will come to pass. The prophet repeated what the king had heard and ignored (v. 18-20). Time will

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<sup>1</sup> 7:2, Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

show, though the king saw, heard, and was even rehearsed again with the promise, he remained an unbeliever.

Why did the king remain an unbeliever? The answer is not overtly stated, but if we think of the estate of the king during the siege, the reason for his unbelief will become clear. He was the king, and when we first find him, he is walking along the wall looking down at the starving multitudes. *He* is not starving. *He* did not run out to the spoil, as did the *hungry* lepers. Instead, he appointed someone to manage the impoverished. His belly was full during the siege even to the point of depleting his stables, save for five steeds. How could he disregard the promise? He was *not hungry*; he had no *need*. While the destitute paid gold for a dinner of dove's dung and feasted on the boiled carcasses of their children, the king's belly remained full. He had no *need!* But the word of God is sure, and to the hungry, it is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

The plain truth is this, when all is done and men stand before the judgment of God, they will see the gospel they disdained shine as the morning Sun in truth and righteousness. When they see the multitudes enrobed in the pristine robes of Christ's righteousness, kings and priests all, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, possessors of the universe entirely by grace—they will rue the fact that when they heard the truth of where the bread was, they were *not* hungry. At the word they discounted, they will be trampled underfoot, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah puts his foot on their throat.

The word of God is true. Discount it at your peril. Pray God to lay siege on your soul and make you hunger and thirst for righteousness.



## RESTORATION

### 2 Kings 8:1-6

1, Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

2, And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

3, And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

4, And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

5, And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

6, And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

**T**his passage is not to be viewed as chronological to the previous chapter. The word “then' does not put the time frame directly after the trampling death of the king's servant. When the seven years of famine took place is not

clearly set forth, and the chronology of the report runs thusly. The first two verses take place prior to the seven years of famine. The next four verses take place after the famine. The first two verses reveal the words of Elisha as he informs the Shunammite woman of the coming famine and instructs her to leave Samaria for kinder climes. Verses 3-6 take place after the woman returns to her home.

The Shunammite woman was special to Elisha. She had respect for the prophet and often fed him as he journeyed by her house. She even set up a chamber, a room for him to rest from his journeys. When asked what she wanted in return for her service and kindness to the prophet, she replied, "I dwell among my own people." This meant that she was content where she was, with what she had, and asked nothing in return. She felt it a privilege to serve the prophet of God. Gehazi had told Elisha that she had no child, so Elisha promised her a son, and she bare the child. Then, the young man died, and the woman told Elisha that she had not ask for this, held him to the covenant that he made with her, and Elisha raised the child from the dead.

At some point after this the famine came, and we have the first two verses of chapter 8. These two verses show the regard of Elisha for this woman, and according to providence, sets a picture of what Christ has done for his people. There are several characters in the Word of God that leave their homeland because God sends a famine; Joseph's father and brethren, and Abimelech and Naomi are just two of the more notable. Others the Lord preserves in the midst of famine, as he did with Elijah and the widow of Ephrata. Regardless, the Lord has ordained that his people are immortal until their course is run and their purpose fulfilled. The woman was sent out, made to leave all she had and knew, so that at the appointed time she would be brought home. In Deuteronomy, our Lord told Israel that he had brought them out that He might bring them in (Deut. 4:20).

The life of the child of God is a display of sovereign providence, his steps being order from the cradle to the grave. Her choice of dwelling during the time of famine was the land of the Philistines, where there was food and sustenance. It was a land of idolatry but a place where she could worship God to the same degree that she was able to worship in Samaria where Israel, at this time, was steeped in idolatry. The woman was a woman of faith, which is seen in that she believed and followed the words of the prophet.

Though there is no such thing as an advantage in grace because it is entirely unmerited, there is a kind of advantage in the *experience* of grace. Our Lord often admonishes His people to remember their numerous deliverances from the past. This said, it is not out of the question that when this dear woman returned to her home, she did so with reasonable expectation of good results. She had, at the hand of sovereign providence, suffered loss and restoration with the death and resurrection of her son. She knew that the Lord was able to do what was impossible with men (v. 3). In verse 3 there is a suggestion that when she returned, things were not well. It seems that when she returned to her home, it had been taken from her, perhaps divided among her family because of greed or resentment for her having left them in the lurch to endure the famine. This is speculation but supported, to some degree, by the fact that upon her return, she immediately sought the king's help for the return of her house and land.

Verses 4-5 further reveals the wonder of God's purpose in grace. The prayer of Hannah echoes through time—"He killeth and He maketh alive. He brings low and raises up." The Shunammite woman has been brought low and must apply to the will of the king. What she does not know is that the king, who up this moment knows nothing of her, is about to learn that this woman is the object of God's miraculous power. While she comes near to where she will make her plea, unbeknownst to her, a dialogue concerning her has already begun between the

king and a leper, Gehazi. The king did not know what he was about to hear would fix his mind on behalf of this woman. His request of Gehazi was to tell him of the great exploits of Elisha (v. 4). Because Gehazi was a leper, some commentators have put the time of this report, prior to the healing of Naaman, thinking erroneously that it was forbidden to *speak* to a leper. It was not. It was forbidden to *touch* a leper.

It is interesting that the king would come to speak to Gehazi, but if you want information, you must go to the source. Until Gehazi was stricken with leprosy, he was present and witness to wondrous things. He had his eyes opened; he saw Naaman healed from leprosy, but the thing he tells the king was of Elisha raising the Shunammite woman's son from the *dead*. As he was telling of this great thing, the woman for whom the miracle was done was approaching the king's house to make her plea. When I read this, I thought of the prodigal son who had wasted all and was on his way home to be a servant in his father's house. He didn't make it home because his father was waiting for him on the road to cover his neck with kisses.

This dear woman did not know that all her requests had been granted by the ruling grace of God. The king's heart was touched by grace, and grace begets grace. While Gehazi finishes the report, the woman and her son walk up. Suddenly the story is supported with visual aids, and the woman never cried out to the king for help. Her estate was settled before she ever asked for it (v. 5).

This pictures the gospel in two ways.

First it pictures what the elect hear and understand when they hear of the great work accomplished by the true Prophet, Priest and King, the Lord Jesus Christ. *Before* they cry for mercy, *before* they come to Christ, they hear that he has already restored all they lost in Adam.

Secondly when one of the elect hear the gospel, the report of the finished work of Christ, grace bubbles out of his heart like streams of living water. When hearing of the great works

of Elisha, the king immediately saw the recipients of the miracle, and the fix was in.

Finally, in verse 6, the king asks the woman, and she told him not only that the child standing with her was dead and yet he lives, but of her plight concerning what she had lost. The king assigns her a servant, a eunuch, or one who had no concerns of posterity but was only concerned with serving. His job was to restore all that was lost by royal command. Is this not a picture of the *minister* of the gospel of grace, whose existence is not to propagate his lineage but to tell and tell again that Christ has restored all that was lost and much more. She was even to receive the fruit that were gathered while she was in a foreign land!

One of the grand themes of the gospel is restoration. Believers are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. The years of sin and loss, the years in Lodebar, may be viewed as a waste, but when the Father says, “get the best coat and put the ring on the finger,” the believer knows that he has lost nothing. Rather he has been given all.

Praise be to the God of all grace, even His son the Lord Jesus Christ



# AM I A DOG

## 2 Kings 8:7-15

7, And Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

8, And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

9, So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

10, And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

11, And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

12, And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.

13, And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.

14, So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover.

15, And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

This is one of the more doctrinally informative passages in the Word of God. Hazael is a definitive character as he represents the truth of depravity and the *inability* of humanity to see themselves as utterly depraved. I have been convinced, since the Lord taught me the gospel, that the single place where men err and the reason they cannot receive the truth of predestination, election, and particular redemption is found in their inability to recognize themselves for what they are. When a man truly grasps the fact of his own depravity, even though he cannot and is not willing to plumb the depths of it, he will embrace the fact that if anything of eternal value comes his way, it must be at the hand of sovereign grace, and if he is lost, he will have to one day confess that any evil that he might have avoided was merely a result of sovereign restraint.

The reason that men personally refuse the gospel is because they do not and cannot believe they are as bad off as the Bible depicts them to be. Men, by nature, love and embrace the false notion of “free will” because, in their mind and heart, it is proof that they are able to rise above what the scriptures declare them to naturally be. Likewise, their refusal of the truth about themselves governs their manifold errors concerning God. Being unable to believe God, they are then unable to believe what He declares them to be, and what naturally follows is that the imagination takes over and begins to reinvent gods that are like themselves.

Men exchange attributes with God and make Him subject to *their* will, rather than they being subject to God’s will. I once heard a preacher on the radio try to explain away the fact that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart by saying that this hardening took place because God offered Pharaoh His word, but Pharaoh refused, and thus his heart was hardened. The preacher thought he was protecting God’s goodness, but all he was doing was making Pharaoh the actor rather than the one acted upon (Rom. 9). That preacher was simply stating that man is not depraved unless he refuses the kindness of God, or that



depravity is the result of an ill choice. This is the revelation of the ignorance of humanity.

Man refuses the kindness of God because he is *depraved*. Depravity is not a choice. It is the terrible and incurable condition of the human heart. Scripture declares that the heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). Scripture declares that a man can no more change his depravity, or control it, than an Ethiopian can change the color of His skin, or a “leopard can change his spots” (Jer. 13:23). The primary deception of the heart is that it is not as bad as it is!

In this passage we see this deception of the human heart, and man's unwillingness to believe that he is truly depraved.

Elisha has traveled to Damascus to accomplish what God had before ordained. In 1 Kings 19:15<sup>1</sup>, the Lord had told Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Syria. What God has purposed must come to pass. Elijah is now in the presence of the Lord, but he who was appointed in his stead (Elisha) is come to fulfill the word of God. The details of Hazael's anointing are remarkable. The anointing will take place by blatant homicide. “The wrath of man shall praise God and the rest He will restrain” (Psa. 76:10).

Benhadad, the king of Syria, is sick. The first thing we here learn is how easily the unbowed are made to bow, and how willing a person is to change his view of God, and his prophet, when infirmity visits his house. I receive a great number of calls from folks who have no interest in the gospel, who suddenly become believers when sickness comes to the door. I am glad to pray for anyone who asks, but I am amazed when folks who despise what I preach ask me to pray for them when they are in trouble. Power and riches are not a bulwark against sickness. The king is sick.

When Benhadad was well, he bowed at the house of the idol of Rimmon, but now sickness has made him distrust the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 19:15, And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

power of his hand carved stump-deity. The adage that says “there are no atheists in fox holes” rings true. Though men exalt *their* will in times of health, they do not seek the help of their will when they are infirm.

Benhadad sends his chief of staff, Hazael, to fetch Elisha. He refers to Elisha as the “man of God” (vv. 7-8). Though such was not Benhadad's sentiments toward Elisha before he became sick (2 Kings 6:8-14), he sends presents to Elisha, referring to himself as the *son* of Elisha (v. 9; The children of Israel called the prophets father). He honors the prophet by intimating that Elisha knows the secret things of heaven by asking “shall I recover.” Elisha's response to Hazael's inquiry is to say that he may recover from the sickness, but he will yet die.

What follows is quite amazing. Elisha fixes his eyes on Hazael, and in blaring silence, just stares at him (v. 11). He continues to do so until Hazael is embarrassed, and then the prophet begins to weep. Hazael is taken aback, stirred within, and asks the prophet why he is weeping. Elisha tells him that he is going to do all manner of evil (v. 12), and that he will murder Benhadad and take his place as king of Syria (v. 13b).

Hazael's response is what I want us to consider (v 13a) —“Am I a dog?” Hazael cannot *imagine* that he would kill the king. He cannot imagine that murder lies within his heart. He cannot believe that he is a murderer *already* (Mark 7:21-23<sup>1</sup>). This is the dilemma of depravity. Depravity prevents the heart from *knowing and owning its condition*. Depravity accounts that lack of evil *behavior* flows from personal goodness and is unable to realize that lack of evil behavior is solely the result of God's sovereign restraint. “There is *none* righteous” and “*none* that doeth good, no not one.” (Rom. 3:10-12). Hazael could not perceive that such a murderous heart abode in his bosom. “Am

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<sup>1</sup> **Mark 7:21-23**, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I a dog?”

He attributed such evil to a beast and not man. His slam on the animal population was actually an exaltation of himself. It is the nature of depravity to think we are capable of guarding against that which easily overcomes us (Matt. 26:35<sup>1</sup>). A man once told me that grace is the separation of the opportunity to do evil and the inclination to do evil. If opportunity arises, grace removes the inclination. If inclination arises, grace removes the opportunity. If God allows both to arrive at the same time, men are *doomed* to act on what is naturally in their hearts.

Elisha was as much as saying that Hazael could not believe that he would do these things or exercise this power of evil in his present position, *but* when he was made *king*, when there was no one to withhold him, he would act according to the dictates of his newfound *authority*. Honor and power change men's attitudes and rarely for the better.

Under normal conditions, we of the lower echelon of dignity and power may look upon those who are above us and shake our heads at their ill behavior. We may disdain David taking Uriah's wife and having him killed, but we know nothing of the intoxication of being in a position where no one can tell us what to do. Once the seed had been planted, and the possibility was in Hazael's heart, it was no big deal to murder the king. I am sure that when Hazael went into the king's chamber to tell him Elisha's report that he may recover, the furthest thing from his mind was to smother the king. He still felt and believed that he was not a dog—a beast to do such a thing.

But as the king lay there in weakness, and where opportunity was presented simultaneously with inclination, what he was truly capable of came to the fore. He murdered the king. To think that he had a choice in the matter is to deny what was in his heart and what is in ours. He was anointed as

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 26:35**, Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

king, and king he would be because his depraved heart could not do otherwise.

Such is the case with everyone born of woman. If you harbor in your mind the delusion that you are somehow above certain sin or certain behavior, you deceive yourself. Left to yourself, the *true you* will emerge, and you cannot imagine how vile that manifestation would be.

The believer knows this about himself and constantly seeks the Lord to prevent him from doing what he is both capable of and oft inclined to do.

The only remedy is a heart replacement (Ezek. 36:26<sup>1</sup>). Believers have not risen above depravity. Their depravity is sovereignly subdued by the Spirit of God. If they differ from another it is not by nature but by the grace of God (1 Cor. 4:7<sup>2</sup>). The principle of this depravity colors everything we are and everything we do (Rom. 7:15-25<sup>3</sup>).

Am *I* a dog? Indeed I am. May God be merciful to me the sinner! May He put a leash on the neck of this cur. May He shed His grace on me! May He, in sovereign grace, restrain me from being me. Lord save me. or I perish! May He make me a new creature in Christ!

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<sup>1</sup> **Ezek. 36:26**, A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

<sup>2</sup> **1 Cor. 4:7**, For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

<sup>3</sup> **Rom. 7:15-25**, For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.



## FOR DAVID'S SAKE

### 2 Kings 8:16-19

16, And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

17, Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

18, And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

19, Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children.

**T**his is the account of Jehoram's third time as interim king or viceroy in Judah. The first time he was given reign was when Jehoshaphat went with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead; the second when he fought against Moab, and here the third time, two years prior to his father, Jehoshaphat's, death. This was not a coup against the throne but a revelation of his father's willingness not to curb the appetite of his child. Like Eli of old, Jehoshaphat did not do well by his children, and Jehoram was a prime example of the evils that follow the child who is not disciplined. The parent who is not willing to discipline his child loves himself and not his child. Jehoram was thirty two when he began to reign and reigned until the age of forty.

Verse 18 is the epitaph of this son of Jehoshaphat, and the Lord leaves nothing to the imagination. His life, for all its worth, is summed up in three phrases, and not one among them is flattering.

First, like most kings before and after him, both in Israel and in Judah, Jehoram “walked in the way of the kings of Israel.” This is no small statement. The list of Godless crimes committed by the predecessors of this king is a duke's mixture of almost every imaginable evil and rebellion against God. The chiefest of these crimes was manifold forms of idolatry, false teaching, and false worship. Golden calves had been made, groves had been established, and high places of all manner of paganism had been erected. The kings of Israel had discounted the worship of the true God, save for when it suited their political ends or when they were backed into a corner and forced to cry out to God. They sought to kill the prophets and bought for themselves pagan priests that agreed with their every whim. Where they could not entirely erase the name of God, they created mixed forms of worship inserting Baal and Ashtaroth into the distinctly designed worship of the true and living God.

They were idolaters and they reveled in their willful ignorance without any reasonable consideration of the consequence (See Isa. 44:9-20). It is one thing for a pagan to bow to a stump, but it is altogether another for one brought up under the priesthood, the oracles, the law, the ceremony, and the testimony to turn from God to the images of man's hands. Our Lord spoke of the dire consequences of sinning against light. All the law and testimony are fulfilled and realized in the person and work of Christ. He is the means, mode, method, and message of worshipping God. Any departure from the gospel in the worship of God is “walking in the way of the kings of Israel” (v. 18).

Secondly, his epitaph comes in the form of a reason for his idolatry—“for the daughter of Ahab was his wife” (v. 18). Kings' marriages are often the source of them slipping into idolatry. The wisest king in Israel, Solomon, was not immune to the influence of his wives. Many of them lead that great king to close out his life with Israel steeped in idolatry. The word “for”

was inspired by the Holy Spirit and gives this marriage as at least one of the reasons for Jehoram's idolatry. However, his idolatry is probably more aligned with the fact that he walked in the steps of her father, Ahab. I have seen many a professing man and woman leave the gospel for what their sinful heart wants, all the while promising the marriage will not affect their love for Christ. A consequence of Jehoram's marriage to Ahab's daughter was that she influenced him to emulate her daddy (2 Chron. 21:11<sup>1</sup>).

Thirdly, the final nail in the coffin of Jehoram was the phrase that was all too often attached to the kings of Israel and Judah. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord" (v. 18). This can be said of every man and woman, but it carries greater weight when is attributed to one who has been given authority to rule God's people. It is further exacerbated by the fact that he was not a king in Israel but in Judah, the house of David.

Our Lord ends the description of this wicked king with a *word of grace*, one that has been often repeated since the kingdom was divided. It is a word that speaks to the gospel of God's grace and his unchanging love for His elect. Jehoram and Judah deserved destruction. Every rebellious, idolatrous act and thought was worthy of death. "Yet [what a kind word] the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake" (v. 19). Judah is spared and so is Jehoram because of the covenant mercies that God had made on behalf of another.

This is a picture of saving grace and a reminder to every believer that their salvation has nothing to do with character and conduct. Thank God! Our salvation from what we deserved was entirely conditioned upon God doing it for Christ's sake. Our salvation was accomplished to glorify God by honoring Christ and His perfect sacrifice. Election, predestination, conformation, suretyship, hearing, believing, propitiation, and expiation are all for Christ's sake! Judah shall not be destroyed

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chron. 21:11**, Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto.



because the great high priest will come from this tribe; the surety will come from this tribe; the Savior will come out of Judah. A babe will be born in Judah who is the ancient of days, whose goings have been from everlasting. Judah is the progenitor of Shiloh—Judah shall not be destroyed.

The elect are immortal, and this world will be spared until the last sheep is brought into the fold—for Christ's sake. "I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).

Finally, the *word of grace* is revealed as to its assurance. It is based on the promise of God, and He "is not a man that He should lie" (Num. 23:19). All the promises of God are "yea, and amen in Christ" (2 Cor. 1:20). His elect are called "children of promise and heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). When it all boils down, our faith is in the promise that we have salvation because of what Christ has *done*. The promise expounded in the word of God is *Christ* whom God has given us, who is the *light* that dispels darkness, discloses our need, is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path, and the light that gives us simpletons understanding—all of it for David's sake—for Christ's sake!

# SURE JUSTICE

## 2 Kings 8:20-29

20, In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

21, So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents.

22, Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

23, And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

24, And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

25, In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign.

26, Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

27, And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab.

28, And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramothgilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram.

29, And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram

the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

**I**t seems that in the study of the kings of Israel and Judah that it is almost like reading the *Book of Judges*. The catch phrase of the *Book of Judges* is, “There was no king in Israel and the people did what was right in their own eyes.” The catch phrase of our study in 2 Kings might be, “There was a king in Israel and the king led the people to do what was right in his own eyes.” The study of the kings in Israel and Judah, save for David who is viewed by inspiration in the grace of God, might well be a treatise on the utter depravity of the elect of God.

We have seen the enemy and it is us. The only thing that differs between the elect and the non-elect is the *grace* of God. If accounted in themselves, they deserve the wrath of God as much, if not more, than the pagans that surround them. Israel was the elect nation of God, chosen out of all others in the world. As all Old Testament occurrences were typical, their election was not unto salvation as a nation but a shadow of good things to come. Israel’s election was typical of the election of grace as to the *kind* of people that God had chosen unto salvation, pagans all, ready to worship a stump at the drop of the hat.

Grace makes no sense to the world that measures the worthiness of men to be saved by their ability to recommend themselves to God. Morality, philanthropy, wealth, and influence are not only not considered but disdained by the concept of grace. Grace is exercised upon the vilest, most depraved societal outcasts—those who by nature despise God, who have neither inclination nor need of God, and the world laughs at the kind of people that God has graciously recovered. They laugh because the salvation of such makes no sense at all. How easily they fall and falter. They have no strength of their own. They cannot assist God, benefit God, nor even help themselves. What a charming bit of dinner conversation must have occurred among the pagans as they joked about Israel, a

people who claimed to be chosen of God yet worshipped Baal and Rimmon. They claimed to love Jehovah but were quick to bow the knee to any Johnnie-come-lately deity that artisans could invent. Mark well that the typology does not speak of the elect nation before they knew of their election, but after—long after.

Grace declares that the elect, those saved by grace, remain without merit and, in and of themselves, have nothing that will recommend them to God. Religion requires and demands evidence of salvation and produces those evidences through threat of wrath or promise of rewards, according to what one has earned. Grace bestows all spiritual blessings upon those whose natural bent is against God altogether. Newton knew what he was saying when he wrote *Amazing Grace*. God in grace accounts His wretched beneficiaries as without sin, holy, blameless, perfect, and pure because of the perfect work of His Son on their behalf, while religionists laugh in disdain as they watch these poor wretched beings fail to live up to their austere piety and meritorious achievements in morality. But it is God who will laugh at them in derision when He has set His king on Zion's holy hill. The multitudes who have donned their righteous robes, broadened their phylacteries, and controlled the lives of men will watch their righteousness turn to filthy menstuous rags while seeing those they have mocked, robed in pristine, immaculate righteousness standing completely accepted before the thrice Holy God—all having had *nothing* to do with their happy estate. To God be the Glory,

These few verses at the end of chapter 8 are also an example of the notion that because God has *not* punished their iniquity, that he *will not*. Such view the longsuffering of God as an indication that he is reticent to exact justice (Eccl. 8:11; 2 Peter 3:9<sup>1</sup>). I cannot say for sure that there is a line that exists that

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<sup>1</sup> **Eccl. 8:11**, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

**2 Peter 3:9**, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all

when crossed by men, God will act in wrath and justice against them. The Bible suggests that such a line exists with the doctrines of reprobation and apostasy. In the case of the destruction of Egypt, God prophesied to Abraham their demise because of their abuse of Israel after they were in captivity 430 years. Then God showed that He had set this for their course with the birth of Joseph, his brother's hatred of him, his imprisonment, his exaltation, and employment of famine that brought Israel to Joseph in Egypt for sustenance. Four centuries later God raised up Pharaoh just to cast him down.

The fact is that because God is Holy, He must punish sin, and his longsuffering with the vessels fitted to destruction is the salvation of His people. The record of Joram and Ahaziah are repetitions of a theme and evidence of God's longsuffering. In the next chapter God will raise up Jehu, and the prophecy concerning the destruction of the house of Ahab will begin in earnest.

Joram and Ahaziah were idolaters and they died, each following the sinful practices of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. They were comfortable in their sin and idolatry because many years and many kings had come and gone, and the golden calves, the groves, and the high palaces still stood. Things continued as they were from the beginning. But these last two kings, one of Judah and one of Israel, will meet horrid ends because of their alliance in false worship.

Edom's rebellion against Judah is simply a matter of fulfillment of prophecy (Gen. 27:38-40<sup>1</sup>). Joram and Ahaziah became allies and went against Hazael—king of Syria (v. 28). Chronologically, this seems out of order because verse 24 records Joram's death. But God often reveals a thing and then

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should come to repentance.

<sup>1</sup> **Gen. 27:38-40**, And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

later give the details of the thing he has already revealed. This record of going against Syria is the revelation of how Joram slept with the fathers and likewise the reason for the death of Ahaziah. One thing of note is that the last king before Jehu, who was raised to destroy the house and works of Ahab, met his Waterloo on the same battlefield that Ahab did, Ramoth Gilead. Ahab and Joram were mortally wounded there (vv. 28-29). A more detailed account of Joram's demise as well as that of Ahaziah is found in 2 Chron. 21:18-20<sup>1</sup> and 22:7-9<sup>2</sup>. Joram died in infamy and his epitaph is in 2 Chron. 21:19-20. Ahaziah's death was of God because of his alliance with Joram.

Sure justice, God will punish sin personally or in the substitute (Ex. 34:5-7<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chron. 21:18-20**, And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

<sup>2</sup> **22:7-9**, And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them. And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> **Ex. 34:5-7**, And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.



# VENGEANCE

## 2 Kings 9:1-10

1, And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramothgilead:

2, And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber;

3, Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

4, So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramothgilead.

5, And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain.

6, And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel.

7, And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.

8, For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel:

9, And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah:



10, And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.

**T**here is a passage in Isaiah 63 that is part of the description of the Savior coming from Bozrah with His vestures dipped in blood, who tread the winepress alone and is mighty to save. This mighty one, even the Lord Jesus Christ says, "...the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come" (Isa. 63:4). Those words address what we looked at in the previous study, the longsuffering of God in enduring those vessels (of His vengeance) made for destruction to the intent that He would show grace to those vessels He had made for His glory—His redeemed. Vengeance is wrath *forestalled*. It is, if you will, a building up of anger, a roiling, seething, compounding of rage, waiting for release.

This verse also refers to the gospel age (the year of the redeemed) wherein all humanity is in the hands of the mediator until the last of the elect is brought to the fold (John 17:2<sup>1</sup>). Then, the vengeance that is in His heart will be unleashed against all who oppose Him, and Mystery Babylon will be consumed with the word of His mouth. Our Lord said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Isa. 63:4). The fact is that because He has not shown vengeance in this hour, men do not believe that He will. Our Lord said, "Vengeance is mine, *I will repay.*"

Recently, the Governor of New Jersey pleaded for help with the devastation of hurricane Sandy. In his plea, he called Sandy "an act of God," and I immediately thought of the words of Job. "Pity me, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job 19:21). That hurricane was *not* vengeance but a reminder that God *is*, and it is He who has commanded the seas saying, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job 38:11).

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<sup>1</sup> **John 17:2**, As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Natural disasters are but small reminders that the elements of the universe are beyond the scope of our control, and even the insurance companies refer to them as “acts of God” which they cannot insure against. But *vengeance* is something else altogether. Though the destruction of the house of Ahab is a picture of vengeance unleashed, and though many of God's people were involved when wrath was poured out, the Lord showed mercy. The things that destroyed the house of Ahab brought the people of God to the throne of mercy.

This chapter is another view, a further rehearsal of the demise of Joram, Jehoram, and Ahaziah as the beginning of the destruction of the house of Ahab and Jezebel. The Lord had suffered these kings, descendants of Ahab and some joined to him through marriage, to fill up their wickedness and idolatry. Now begins the destroyer—the avenger of blood (v. 7), and his name is Jehu. He is soon to be anointed king and to be wielded as the sword of justice in the hand of God against Ahab's idolatrous house. No quarter will be given, and there will be no prisoners taken. Nothing but death will suffice. For Ahab's cruel idolatrous family and progeny, the slayer has whet his cutlass, and when it is over, that entire house will be nothing but an unpleasant memory and memorial to the hatred of God against idolatry.

Elijah made this prophecy against Ahab, his wife, and his house, and now it falls to Elisha to begin the end. He is with the school of prophets, enjoying fellowship and communion when the word of the Lord comes to him. Immediately he assigns the task of anointing Jehu as king and avenger to a young man. The instructions to the young man are simple (v. 1-3).

He was also given a message for the newly anointed king, Joram (v. 6-10). Jehoram and Ahaziah are in repose enjoying their temporary yet doomed peace. They have hired themselves prophets and pastors that “cried peace when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11). There is a bomb under the throne of Ahab, and it

will soon detonate and blow this house to pieces—yet they are at ease. Like Belshazzar, the hand has written on the wall, “you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting” (Dan. 5:27). Your kingdom will be ripped from your grasp.

Like Haman, Ahab has built the gallows for his enemies, but it his own neck that will be stretched on the rope that he has plaited. How like the world this house is! Men and women seated with the rudiments and pleasures of this world while the thunderheads form and while judgment approaches with the speed of a juggernaut. Why does judgment come? Look at verse 7. The blood of God's servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, have cried aloud from the earth. Blood-guiltiness will be avenged and that right quickly (Luke 18:7-8<sup>1</sup>). This world and its history is about the people of God. Now judgment begins and the pleasures for a season will soon be over.

I want us to see this young man and his message as he pictures the preacher of the gospel.

First, the prophet appointed him to this task. So it is with every true minister of the Lord. The Great Prophet, Jesus Christ, puts men in the ministry. They are installed with a task. They are to *speak*, to tell out the truth, and though to the ruined sinner, it is good news, to the infidel, the idolater, the lover of this world, it is a message of doom and despair. The theme found throughout scripture concerning the salvation of the elect is that with that salvation comes the utter destruction of the enemy. Paul said that he nor any other preacher is “sufficient for these things” (2 Cor. 2:16). The power of the gospel, both saving and destroying, is placed in the hands of the preacher, but thank God, the results have nothing to do with him. “Go and tell” is his commission, and it is given him by Christ.

Secondly, the messenger’s first job is to *anoint* the king. For

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<sup>1</sup> **Luke 18:7-8**, And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

the preacher, this is his initial task. Though God has anointed Christ, the preacher places the crown upon His head every time he *preaches* the gospel—and the believer does so when he *believes*. By declaration and proclamation every believer anoints Christ as king. This young prophet anointed Jehu as king. Jehu means, “Jehovah is He.” This is the proclamation. The king whom we gladly anoint is none other than God Himself, the sovereign ruler of the universe (Isa. 52:7<sup>1</sup>). The preacher's task, as to anointing Christ as king, is only in the matter of proclamation. Within that proclamation is the power of God unto salvation. Those whom God has saved, He has also made kings and priests. So also, Jehu was anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. He was instructed to do so by the preacher sent with a message from the Lord.

Third, so it is with every believer. The very presence of the saved sinner in this world is a declaration of the destruction of the world. The message to the world is that of destruction, while at the same time, it is the message of salvation to the elect. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Our Lord said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24). These are both the same message. The salvation of the elect is the destruction of all that oppose God, whether overtly or simply by choosing the pleasures of the world for a season.

Finally, the young man followed the instructions of the Prophet. “And he opened the door, and fled” (v. 10). The preacher declares what God has said—and leaves. He does not stick around to help in the execution of the thing that only God can do. He does not invent ways to get folks to do what God has said. He declares what God has *done*, and what He has said He *will do*. He has confidence in the gospel, and he knows that the results belong to Jehu (“Jehovah is He”). Some are baffled

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. 52:7, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

by the fact that we do not give invitations, try to pressure people, or diminish the truth by calling the gospel some simple plan that appeals to the non-existent power of impotent humanity. Christ is King—He is Jehovah! He has redeemed His people and will wreak vengeance on all His enemies.

This is the *entirety* of the ministry of the servant appointed to the task.

# JUSTICE EXECUTED

## 2 Kings 9:10-37

10, And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.

11, Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.

12, And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

13, Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

14, So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramothgilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria.

15, But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel.

16, So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram.

17, And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace?

18, So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu said, What

hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

19, Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

20, And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

21, And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22, And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?

23, And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah.

24, And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

25, Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him;

26, Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

27, But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

28, And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulcher with his fathers in the city of David.

29, And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

30, And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

31, And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?

32, And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

33, And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

34, And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter.

35, And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

36, Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:

37, And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

**2** Kings 10:10 reads, “Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah.” These are the words of Jehu after he made a pile of the heads of Ahab's sons in the town square. He makes it clear that the heap of severed heads is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah, and that God's word will never fall to the earth. This phrase means



that the word of the Lord is sealed in heaven and is not subject to the minds and will of men. What God has promised, He will do, and this collection of decapitated pates are a visual declaration that when all else passes off the scene, God's word stands. Joram, Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel have long enjoyed their temporary ease and now the wrath of God, in the form of Jehu, is about to finish their evil careers.

The account of that torrent of terror is in the next several chapters beginning here in chapter nine. Jehu will act in relentless zeal to rid Israel of any remnant of the house of Ahab and those who have followed the evil, idolatrous practices of Ahab and his whorish wife. Jezebel will be terminally touched by the hand of God. Religion has been somewhat successful in diminishing, if not destroying, the truth of God's justice and wrath against sin. The false notions of universal love and universal atonement have made men and women to lose any idea of reverence for God. They think Him to just be "there for them," waiting as a means of escape, and hoping that sovereign man will allow him to be of service to them.

The singular attribute of God that underpins all that He is and does is His *absolute sovereignty*. Religion has thought to transfer much of that power to men, and because God has not acted in vengeance, they believe their plans and their theology have been proven correct. What they refuse to know is that all humanity has been placed under the authority of Christ for the sole purpose of giving "eternal life to as many as God has given Him" (John 17:2). So it was with Ahab's house, and Jehu is about to bring it all to an end.

After Jehu's men have acknowledged His anointing (vv. 11-13), they proclaimed Jehu as king. If you have a Bible with marginal readings, you will see that the words translated "is king" is literally "reigneth." This is what being a king means—"reigning authority." Joram and Ahaziah were in Jezreel. Joram was recovering from wounds that he incurred in a battle with Hazeel; Ahaziah had come to see how he was faring—two

kings that made up the target for the arrows of retribution.

When the watchmen saw Jehu coming and reported to Joram, he sent out three men to inquire if the one who came, came in peace. Jehu's reply was "what do you know of peace." This is a telling question. Evidently the peace that Joram and Ahaziah thought they were experiencing was not peace at all but was God enduring the vessels He made to destroy. Their peace was but a vapor. The false bought-and-paid-for prophets had cried peace and safety, and the kings were calm, even as the whirlwind of woe approached.

The record of Jehoram's demise is revisiting the scene of a previous crime (vv. 20-26). Jezebel had Naboth killed to get his vineyard as a present for her husband, Ahab. Now the son of Ahab gets an arrow through the heart, and his body was cast out in the very place that had belonged to the servant of God.

Ahaziah's end is recorded in verses 27-28. He died in the valley of Megiddo.

Jezebel's demise is the most graphic of the three deaths recorded here, and the reason is plain. She is representative of Babylon—the great whore. She was a homicidal maniac, a psychopathic murderess. Verse 30 shows that she was no wilting wallflower. Her arrogance knows no bounds. Rather than cower and seek escape, she puts on her make up, styled her hair, and comes to an upper window to display herself in presumed majesty. She was not seeking peace nor was she dressed to assuage the anger of Jehu. Instead, she mockingly accuses Jehu of being like Zimri, who she said had slain his master, the king. Zimri did not slay Elah, son of Baasha. Elah, when besieged by Zimri, set his own house on fire, and burned himself up. She spoke thus because she meant to assert that she would take no guff from Jehu. Like Pharaoh of old, she as much as said, "I don't know your God, and neither will I obey Him." She was the quintessential rebel, defiant until the end. She had outlived them all. She had murdered, made prophets tremble, and she was still around. But there were some canines in the

wings whose mouths had begun to drool.

When Jehu sees the spectacle of Jezebel standing above him in the window, he called for anyone in her house to step over the line from this woman. Two or three chamberlains availed themselves to Jehu and his instructions to them were simple —“Throw her down” (v. 33). Her descent to infamy and notoriety was quick. From the high place of self-delusion to the doormat of the king, this is the destiny of all those who put themselves in the path of the avenger of blood. But even as Jehu trampled her underfoot, he observed protocol. He sent men out to bury the cursed woman.

When they arrived, they found only a few remnants of the painted whore. Her entire torso was missing. All that was left of her eviscerated frame was a dead *head*, dead *hands*, and dead *feet*, signifying the rebellious thoughts and will of men, the works of men’s hands, and the walk of men. The dogs of justice had been at her and had feasted on the carrion of rebellion personified. Elijah had spoken and prophesied her end, and God whistled for His dogs to “lick her blood from the street (vv. 35-36).

Verse 37 is the final appraisal of the woman that had so sorely vexed the prophets and people of God. Her epitaph will not read that her carcass was carrion for the canines, but manure spread on the face of history. Her shame and disgrace were such that no one would ever want to call Jezreel their home. The effect of that pronouncement is realized. Even to this day, the name Jezebel is synonymous with whoredoms, rebellion, and divine justice.

The Lord will avenge His elect.

# WRATH UNLEASHED

## 2 Kings 10:1-11

1, And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children, saying,

2, Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour;

3, Look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.

4, But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand?

5, And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes.

6, Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to morrow this time. Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up.

7, And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him them to Jezreel.

8, And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning.

9, And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out,

and stood, and said to all the people, Ye be righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these?

10, Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah.

11, So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

**W**e last studied the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophesy against Ahab, Jezebel, Joram, Jehoram, Ahaziah and the entire lineage of Ahab. Jehu's orders were plain and decisive—kill them all, no prisoners, and no survivors. Kings have fallen. Dogs have licked the blood of Ahab from the street and dismembered the regal frame of Jezebel. Jehu is the sword of vengeance in the hands of the Lord. Now, in this passage, the carnage comes hard against the household of Ahab.

Ahab had seventy sons (grandsons) that were under the care of tutors, pedagogues, and caretakers. The targets of justice have already been painted on their accursed anatomies. They, as far as society is concerned, are innocent of all but the fact that they had bad parents. As far as God was concerned, they have continued in the idolatrous practices of their father, Ahab, and not sought to bring Israel back to the ordained manner of true worship of the one true God. For them, there will be no possibility of escape and the workings of providence are entirely against them, though they were unaware of the avenger of blood that was plotting their demise. They were just living their life.

Jehu sent letters to the rulers in Jezreel. The language of the letters must be seen in light of that which they were written. Jehu was being *sarcastic*. He was not telling these men to prepare for war but issuing a dare to which he knew the

response beforehand (v. 2-3). He knew the news of his king-slayings had reached the ears of these men. They knew that the mighty and fearless queen, Jezebel, had been reduced to kibble. They knew that Jehoram and Ahaziah were but memories. They knew or sensed that the ease which they had enjoyed under these kings, in the continued fleshly worship of Baal, was now in jeopardy, and God had marked the iniquity of Ahab and none would stand. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). The rulers in Jezreel *knew* that the longsuffering God would no longer suffer them to continue in their idolatrous career. Sure death is a very effective way to prioritize. Conscience makes cowards of us all, and the dire necessity of self-preservation became priority number one. When God shows up, presumed options fly into the ether.

Richard Baxter wrote in reference to meeting God, "Bow or burn!" Rolf Barnard used to say, "Stack you guns in the corner and surrender." What these men of Jezreel did is a lesson to us all. Rebellion, long practiced, seems a *normal* existence. Maggots on a dunghill do not know the stench—it is their home. But when the pure light of the gospel discloses that rebellious normalcy is actually an affront to God, an offense to God, and the stench of your home rises in your nostrils, there is but one thing to do—hit the dirt, crawl to mercy's threshold, and move not a muscle till you hear the King's voice saying, "rise and walk, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:23). The only place to hide *from* God is to hide *in* God. When these men of Jezreel read Jehu's letter, they cried with a singular, timorous unity, "O king, we will not fight nor promote a king to fight you. We are your servants do what you will with us—do what seemeth good in thy sight" (vv. 4-5).

In their words of surrender, they made the statement that they, as servants, would do the bidding of Jehu. Now, they will be required to do a vicious thing. Jehu commanded them to take the seventy sons of Ahab and decapitate them. It is no small thing to be the servant of the *King*. Absolute authority

does not compute to the American psyche. The very existence of this nation is in part due to rebellion against a king, but the king's words are law. As I read verse 6, I thought of Moses standing at the base of Sinai, drawing a line in the sand and saying, "Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me." Just moments before, the entire outfit, Aaron included, had been dancing and laughing around the golden calf. Now the Lord's hand appeared, and the party has come to a screeching halt.

Those who crossed the line to Moses in effect surrendered to the Lord to do His bidding. And they were bid to put on their swords and kill everybody on the other side of the line (3,000 brothers, fathers, and companions). And one day, not too far hence, such will be required of every servant of the King of kings. All rebels, whether close kin or utter strangers, will be slaughtered at the coming of the Lord with His saints, and praise will fill the universe for the salvation of the Lord (Rev. 19:1-6<sup>1</sup>).

The first task given the servants of Jehu was to sever the heads of the seventy sons of Ahab (v. 6). As servants, they obeyed their king (v. 7). And after they reported that the deed was done, Jehu told them to take the baskets full of heads and put them in two piles just outside the gates of Jezreel (v. 8). This was a political move on the part of Jehu. He would use it not only to assure that he was the vengeance of the Lord, but also to assuage his own personal responsibility in a comparative manner (v. 9). He personally owned the death of Jezebel, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, but asks the multitude to consider his acts in light of

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<sup>1</sup> **Rev. 19:1-6**, And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God omnipotent reigneth.

the acts of the men of Jezreel. Yes, he had killed kings and queens, but what is that compared to the twin heaps of bloody heads that decorated the entrance into Jezreel (v. 9).

To the minds of the multitude, that which they had not seen could not compare to what they had seen. To them, these severed heads were the slaughter of innocents. This was pure self-centeredness on Jehu's part and was about his love of self. He did not need to excuse himself as he was on a divine mission as is clearly seen in verse 10 (1 Kings 12:21, 29<sup>1</sup>). The millstone of prophesied purpose is rolling and grinding the house of Ahab to pulp. Pity those who have been ordained to this condemnation and rejoice that you have been saved by grace because Ahab and Jezebel differed not one whit from you and I—save for the Sovereign grace of God.

Verse 11 is the conclusion of this chapter in the ruin of Ahab's house, and the word so assures us that it was not an anomaly, but a matter of course for the holy sword of God's vengeful wrath "until he left none remaining" (v. 11).

When God crosses your path at the point of your rebellion, bow, surrender, and fall on His mercy.

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Kings 12:21**, And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

**29**, And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.





# HOWBEIT

## 2 Kings 10:12-31

12, And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. And as he was at the shearing house in the way,

13, Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who are ye? And they answered, We are the brethren of Ahaziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king and the children of the queen.

14, And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing house, even two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

15, And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

16, And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.

17, And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.

18, And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much.

19, Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.

20, And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it.

21, And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.

22, And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.

23, And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only.

24, And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him.

25, And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal.

26, And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them.

27, And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day.

28, Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

29, Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan.

30, And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

31, But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

**I**n this passage, the events that transpire in Jehu's final push against the house of Ahab are clearly defined. The sword of vengeance is swift and sure. Ahab and the god he worshipped are on borrowed time. God's longsuffering has afforded them ample time to live in the lap of luxury, to fill up their iniquity and become as fatted beasts prime for the slaughter.

Jehu first meets with the kinfolk of Ahaziah (vv. 12-15). They were headed to pay homage to the children of the king and queen. Exactly who is meant by “the children of the king and queen” is not stated. It could have meant Ahaziah and Jezebel, or Joram and his queen. The fact they stated their plans so freely suggests that they were unaware that Ahaziah and Jezebel were dead. Jehu killed all forty-two of them and tossed their carcasses in the pit of the shearing house (Jer. 23:1-3<sup>1</sup>). This was an appropriate end in that the house of Ahaziah had sheared the sheep of Israel and had not fed them. Now they are cast into the pit where the filth was washed from the fleece.

In verses 16-28, Jehu, after finishing off the house of Ahab in verse 17, goes after the prophets of Baal and their god. He hatches a plan to fool the whole outfit by lying to the prophets and their servants. In all probability, these false prophets had not heard of the demise and dismemberment of their greatest supporter and staunch political ally, Jezebel. Had they known, they would not have so readily agreed to Jehu's covert scheme. Jehu played to their religious ego, part of which was to gain

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 23:1-3, Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

political power. Religion without Christ, since it is void of the power of the gospel, often seeks alternate sources of influence by which it can exercise control over people—e.g., the law, or personal convictions. Being aligned with a king is a legitimate enticement. So, Jehu declares his alignment with Baal in a most grandiose manner (v. 18). He lied with the zeal and charisma of an evangelist. The bold-face prevarication worked like a charm.

When Jehu told the false prophets that he was going to institute an enormous worship service for Baal and offer great sacrifice to the false deity, it was a boon to the false prophets. The approving nod of the king gave them, to their mind, legitimacy in Israel. Jehu even made it a matter of life and death by as much as saying, “Who is on Baal’s side, show up for the gala, or on pain of death, deny that Baal is god by your absence” (v. 19). That the entire scheme was a lie is recorded for us by the Spirit (v. 19c). In verse 20, Jehu commands the prophets to proclaim the solemn assembly. The proclamation was properly the sanctification or setting apart a feast day of total Baal worship. There was to be no work done on that day, all a mockery of the Sabbath of God and the finished work of Christ. Every prophet and his servants attended the worship service.

The place was packed to the brim with those who came out of love for Baal or fear of death, and the original language suggests that they were shoulder to shoulder—literally, mouth to mouth, suggesting a single voice of praise to Baal. Jehu left no room for mistakes. He ordered that the vestry be visited and proper Baal worship robes be issued to everyone there. This further distinguished the attendants from the worship of the true God. He even sent in Jehonadab, descendent of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, a pious man (v. 23; Jer. 35:6-10<sup>1</sup>), to

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 35:6-10, But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath

make sure there were no worshippers of the true God present (v. 23). There were two reasons for this.

First, it added to the ruse. It made the Baal worshipper feel superior in that only true worshippers of Baal made up the crowd.

Secondly, Jehu wanted to make sure there were no children of God there because this great gathering was for bloodletting and not that of sacrifice and burnt offering.

When the festivities were in high gear, Jehu sent in eighty swordsmen to slaughter them all and let none escape on penalty of death (v. 24). The words “cast them out” in verse 25 does not refer to the slain bodies but to the actions of the swordsmen after the carnage. The words actually mean “flung themselves” or “made haste” to leave the place as the task was not yet finished. This is seen in verse 26. They brought the minor images of Baal (images of the image) and burned them there. Then they destroyed the major image of Baal and made the entire place a draught or sewer house—a common latrine. I will leave it to your imagination as to how they instituted it.

This was the end of Baal and his prophets who had long withstood the prophets of God. Their covering, their atonement, was the putrefaction of defecation on their man-made deity. Thus, Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Mission accomplished (v. 30).

The title of this study is “Howbeit.” Though Jehu had done what he was commanded, had been used successfully as the sword of vengeance, and his children would be rewarded for his accomplishment, the word of the Lord declares a caveat. “Howbeit” (v. 29) is not a conjunction in this case. It is actually a phrase that reads something like “only sins and guilt.” Jehu, though victorious against Ahab’s house and the idol Baal, was yet an idolater *himself*. He still bowed and paid homage to the

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charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

golden calves that Jeroboam had erected in Bethel and Dan (vv. 29, 31). He was a tool in the Lord's hands to wipe out one idol but not another. *His* idol will be destroyed by another instrument in the Lord's hand. This is the wondrous hand of God, employing his enemies to destroy other of his enemies

There are a few things I want to consider.

The first is how thankful we should be that God has turned us from idols to serve Him. Had He left us to ourselves, we might have been employed like Jehu, and still have never known Christ. Thank God for predestinating and electing grace! I considered this in light of *my* former legal religion. How zealous I was to verbally slay false religion and their practices. The thought of it put me in league with Jehu. Like Jehu, I was an idolater slaying idolaters and doing it in the name of the Lord, believing I had a divine commission from on high. In pointing out their error, I felt I was justifying myself (Gal. 6:12-13<sup>1</sup>). We see this attitude in Jehu when he first met Jehonadab (vv. 15-16). His language betrays him. Though he mentions the name of the Lord, just who is he asking Jehonadab to notice? "Come see my zeal! Take note of how I pursue and slay the enemies of the Lord."

His invitation to Jehonadab was the need for an audience to observe his great doings. All false religionists do what they do to be seen of men (Matt. 23:5-7<sup>2</sup>; compare with Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18<sup>3</sup>). No doubt, Jehonadab had heard of Jehu's exploits and

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<sup>1</sup> **Gal. 6:12-13**, As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

<sup>2</sup> **Matt. 23:5-7**, But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

<sup>3</sup> **Matt. 6:1-6**, Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward

was wholly in agreement with them (v. 15). But we find that Jehu's true mission was self-recognition. Cruelty came easy to Jehu, because at the bottom of his ventures, was an idolatrous heart—a heart that could not survive without acknowledging self. The mark of the believer is that when sin is disclosed, he points his finger at himself, but when God's glory is involved, he points to Christ. The believer seeks to be unnoticed—He must increase, and I must decrease.”

Finally, God is past finding out. Men have poor, sympathetic, and pathetic views of God. He is not like men think He is. His thoughts are not as our thoughts nor His ways as our ways. He does not give account of His matters. He does as He pleases, and his creatures are not allowed to question Him and His methods. Though “He is not a man that He should lie,” in His great providential plan, He sometimes uses a lie to accomplish His end—e.g., Rahab, Jehu. All we can say is that in everything He has done, He is right, and He has made His goodness to pass before us.

“It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth good in His sight” (1 Sam. 3:18).

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thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

**16-18,** Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.





# PRESERVATION

## 2 Kings 11:1-21

1, And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

2, But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.

3, And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

4, And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

5, And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6, And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

7, And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.

8, And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.

9, And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the

sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10, And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD.

11, And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

12, And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

13, And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

14, And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason.

15, But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

16, And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

17, And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD'S people; between the king also and the people.

18, And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

19, And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the

captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20, And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house.

21, Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

**I**n the last study, we saw Jehu destroy the house of the house of Ahab, demolish the last remnants of the prophets handmade deity, Baal, and turn the entire place into a public latrine. That took place in Samaria.

This episode of the destruction of the remnant of Ahab's house and the temple of Baal takes place in Jerusalem. This is the record of Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, daughter of Ahab and granddaughter of Omri, seeking to destroy the royal seed, the house of David and the lineage of Judah. This automatically perks the ears of the believer because of the covenant with the house of David that began in eternity and was first revealed in Genesis 3:15<sup>1</sup>.

Athaliah's slaughter of the royal line included the sons of Ahaziah, her own grandsons. She was a ruthless woman whose ambitions and lust for power mirrored that of her mother and father, Jezebel and Ahab. She meant to have that throne and succeeded in her claim reigning in Judah for 6 years. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Though many commentators give varied reasons for what she did, on a purely human level, she simply had a lust for authority and fame. She was the mother of the slain king, the daughter of the dreaded Jezebel, and she was not about to give the throne to some upstart. She would be queen even if it meant that her throne would be awash with the blood of her grandbabies. Her design and intent were born of pride, a

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<sup>1</sup> **Gen. 3:15**, And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

runaway ego, and to assign some other natural motive would be erroneous. The language of verse one reveals that upon the news of her son's death she began the slaughter of the seed of the kingdom.

Unbeknownst to her, the plot to exalt herself was thwarted by Jehosheba, Ahaziah's half-sister from another mother. Jehosheba was also the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest. She rescued Joash, the last king left in the house. He was but a year old and was hidden from Athaliah for six years while that usurper reigned in Judah. Once again, we see the Lord suffer long with His enemies. Predestinated providence allows them to relax in presumptuous safety and ease while protecting them from harm, as they are fattened for the kill. The enemies of God count His longsuffering to be slackness, while His children acknowledge it to be their salvation.

After six years pass, the millstone of wrath is about to be hung on the neck of the ersatz queen. Jehoiada gathers the priests and captains. The captains are issued the shields and spears that David had recovered in his battles (v. 10). He sets the priests in array in the temple surrounding Joash, the seven-year-old regal who is about to be crowned king of Judah. The rest of the men he stations at various gates to ensure the capture and killing of any enemy that would approach to do harm to the new king (vv. 8, 11).

After Jehoiada, the high priest, made a covenant with the captains and the guard to assist and stand with him as he anointed the king and rend the throne from Athaliah, he swore them to an oath of secrecy till the deed was done (v. 4). These things done, Jehoiada brings out the child and places the crown on his head and the testimony in his hand (v. 12). The crown belongs to the king alone, and the testimony is the Word of God by which he will justly govern the people of the Lord. After he crowned Joash, the crowd erupted in applause and shouted with one accord, "God save the king" or "Let the king live" (v. 12). Though it is not recorded, if we consider the

response of Athaliah, the preparations that Jehoiada made certainly anticipated Athaliah's reaction. Being queen and equipped with the genetic makeup of her notorious mom and dad, reason would have it that she would immediately seek to quell any notion of a ruler other than herself (v. 1).

Athaliah could not contain herself. She was queen, and for someone to cry aloud “God save the king” was tantamount to tyranny (v. 12-14). Without consideration of personal harm—who would dare cross her—she went to the temple where the crowd was applauding and clapping. Her trek marked her last steps among the living, but the invincible queen had but one thing in mind.

When she arrived, she saw the king of Judah standing beside a pillar with the crown upon his head and ripped off her clothes in symbolic disdain and response to insult often associated with blasphemy (Matt. 26:65<sup>1</sup>). After she cried “treason,” she evidently left, perhaps even ran from the place because Jehoiada told the captains to follow her and kill her. They followed her to the horse gate, and it was there they ended her infamous career.

Jewish history suggests that her body was cast into the brook Kidron, a gully filled with the carcasses of sacrifices, sewage, and garbage from the city. It was the brook that our Lord symbolically drank from (Ps. 110:7<sup>2</sup>), that David crossed when he was betrayed (2 Sam. 15:3<sup>3</sup>), and pictured Christ's betrayal, his being made to be sin, and tasting death for us. It was that brook that was washed clean when the fall rains, called Marshevan, came from above to carry the filth and foul to the Dead Sea. It was the time of year that our Lord left glory and came from above to wash away our vile sins with His blood. In

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 26:65**, Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

<sup>2</sup> **Ps. 110:7**, He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

<sup>3</sup> **2 Sam. 15:3**, And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

Joel, our Lord is typified by the “former and latter rains” whose true translation is “righteous and the teacher of righteousness” (Joel 2:23).

After Athaliah's demise, Jehoiada made a covenant with the king and people. The covenant was for them to acknowledge that the Lord was their God, they were His people, and Joash was the king of Judah according to the Lord's purpose (vv. 17-21).

So ends the record of Athaliah, and her god fares no better than she (v. 18).

This episode is an historical record of our *sure* salvation. There will be a king in Judah, a king ordained by God to occupy David's throne. Athaliah's efforts to destroy the regal seed has been the occupation of Satan since the beginning. Herod was employed by Satan to kill Jesus after news of the birth of the King of Israel. Numerous counterfeits have risen that claim the prophecy of the seed of woman as their own. Semiramis, Tammuz, Isis, Osiris, and even the mother of Christ has been canonized, bastardized, and made a mediatrix coequal with Christ in salvation. All these have had reasonable success and been permitted to exist until their day is done and they are cast into the garbage pile with the rest of the rebels. The seed of woman will prevail—will come. The Messiah will arrive in His temple, and the rebels who cry “treason” will be slain.

Athaliah is a picture of rebellion, that nature which we have all received from Adam. To the rebel, the idea that there is a king other than us is treasonous. In our flesh we all cry, “We will not have this man reign over us”—and we all must and will die for it—in person or in our substitute. Sin, at its core, is decidal intent toward God and His Christ. But it is all to no avail! Fools strive against their maker.

While Athaliah enjoyed her short time, the purpose of God was neither discouraged nor thwarted. God had promised that David's throne would be occupied until David's son and David's Lord would sit upon it eternally. While these nefarious kings

and queens temporarily occupied the throne, providence was pulling their strings, and it all would prove to be for God's glory (1 Kings. 8:16; 11:12, 32; 34; 15:4<sup>1</sup>). Christ shall reign till all His enemies are made His footstool.

All those rebels that have been chosen unto salvation will be brought to the king, and there they will acknowledge him as king—rightful king—ordained sovereign. With one voice they will cry, “Glory and honor belong to him that liveth forever.” They will aver Christ is their Lord and they are His people because through all the bad kings and tribulation, the purpose of God stands, and His people will be saved—all of them.

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Kings. 8:16**, Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

**11:12**, Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

**32**, (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

**34**, Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes.

**15:4**, Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem.





# REPAIRING THE BREACHES

## 2 Kings 12:1-16

1, In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba.

2, And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

3, But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

4, And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD,

5, Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6, But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

7, Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

8, And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9, But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was

brought into the house of the LORD.

10, And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD.

11, And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD,

12, And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

13, Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD:

14, But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD.

15, Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

16, The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'.

**T**his is the record of Jehoash (Joash) gathering funds from the people to repair the breaches in the temple. Breaches are places of disrepair brought about by neglect or actual damages caused by someone on purpose. In this case both scenarios apply. Numerous kings that had set aside the worship of the true God and opted for the handmade deities, such as Baal Baalim and the golden calves, had long neglected the temple. The worship of the true God was all but a thing of memory in the minds of the ancients.

Also, according to 2 Chron. 24:7<sup>1</sup>, these breaches were

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. 24:7, For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow

caused by Athaliah and her sons, and involved physical damage to the building as well as the theft of the sanctified vessels appointed to various sacrifices and rites. The misuse of these elements would bring down the house of Belshazzar. Athaliah and her sons had profaned these things by using them in the worship of Baal, and they were no longer to be found in the temple. The worship of Baal had long been ingrained in the minds of the people, so much so, the Bible records that along with transportation of the tabernacle, the people also transported the image of Baal on their sojourn. The mixture of the true and the false was now a common thing to the people of God.

Joash took counsel with Jehoiada the high priest, and the coalition between these two brought true worship back to Jerusalem.

In the last study we saw the images of Baal torn down and the priests of Baal eliminated. This portion of scripture records the beginning of the return of the temple to its true purpose—the various sacrifices that pictured the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to note that it was the alliance of the king and the priest that brought these things about. How wonderfully this points to our Lord, the King of kings and the Great High Priest, who alone built the temple and gets the glory for doing so (Zech. 6:12-13<sup>1</sup>). It is said of Joash that he “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (v. 2). That language intimates that it was because of the coalition between him and Jehoiada that this restoration took place.

However, the intractable hold that idolatry had on the people was not entirely abolished. The high places remained,

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upon Baalim.

<sup>1</sup> **Zech. 6:12-13**, And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

and the people offered sacrifices and burned incense there (v. 3). The “high places” were ridges or hills. The original word means “a raised cubic structure” and can even mean a “burial mound.” The psychology of the high places is the same as the Tower of Babel. In the mind of the idolater, heights bring them in closer proximity to God. High places elevate the individual. God is glorified when men take the lowest place. Scripture says that God is high and holy, but this refers to character. He is omnipresent. We live, move, and have our being in Him. The common misconception, based on the Old Covenant, is that God is worshipped in a place (John 4:19-24<sup>1</sup>). Under the old covenant, God did designate a place—Jerusalem—in the temple. High places were prohibited for worship.

But under the covenant of grace, the place is a *person*. He is the head of the church, and his body is the church. Together they make up the Temple of God (Eph. 2:19-21<sup>2</sup>). It is the singularity of the Old Covenant temple that points to Christ alone. God is worshipped in Christ and that through the preaching of the truth (the gospel) with the Spirit come down from heaven. It is even possible that the people were actually sacrificing to the true God in these high places, but it was prohibited because His name was *in* the temple. It was there only that He would be worshipped.

Joash and Jehoiada sent out word that the taxes taken in by the temple in required offerings were to be collected as well as the freewill offerings of the people (those that were not given by

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<sup>1</sup> **John 4:19-24**, The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

<sup>2</sup> **Eph. 2:19-21**, Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

legal constraint but freely and willingly—v. 4). The money was to be used to repair the breaches in the temple (v. 5). But for some reason, the breaches were not repaired (v. 6). Whether the priests kept the booty for themselves, or the people were lax in giving is not known, but what they did next clearly reveals that the money was not there to do the job.

Joash and Jehoiada approached the giving in another way. They told the priests to stop collecting the money personally and to place a collection box by the altar at the entrance of the temple. All money given was put in the box, and soon it was filled. After it was counted and recorded it was given to the workers to repair the breaches in the temple. The builders and hewers of stone were given the money without any requirement to give account of it (v. 15). They were *trusted* to finish the job without the interference of overseers (vv. 7-12, 14-15). The money brought was not used to restore the elements of worship that Athaliah had profaned. It was to be used only for the repair of the temple (v. 13). But this record should end with the word “yet” because what money *was* left after the repair of the breaches was indeed used for these elements (2 Chron. 24:14<sup>1</sup>). The honesty of the builders and hewers was commendable.

I believe there is a lesson here about giving. It is seen in the difference between the first and second receipt, and it is a simple truth expounded in the New Testament. A person is more likely to give more when they are freely giving than when an exact amount is required.

The amounts *required* were “atonement” money (a half shekel) required in order to be numbered in Israel and the priest’s assessment money recorded in Leviticus 27:1-8<sup>2</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chron. 24:14**, And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

<sup>2</sup> **Lev. 27:1-8**, And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the LORD by thy estimation. And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel

priest's assessment was for redemption of those that belonged to the priests and to be used for the temple. The freewill money was what a man found in his heart to give (v. 4d). The collection box was private, for personal giving, and far exceeded that which was required. The New Testament declares that in giving, a man is not to let his left hand know what his right is doing, and as he purposes in his own heart—so let him give. Love gives—law takes. Charity cannot be compelled or legislated.

The trespass money and sin money (v. 16) were monies given to purchase clean beasts to be slain by *individuals* who were away at the time of the sacrifice of the sin offering and the trespass offering for sins of omission. Both picture the believer's faith in the merits of Christ.

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of the sanctuary. And if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels. And if it be from five years old even unto twenty years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels. And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver. And if it be from sixty years old and above; if it be a male, then thy estimation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels. But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him.

## WITHOUT COUNSEL

### 2 Kings 12:17-21

17, Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

18, And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

19, And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20, And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla.

21, For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

**S**hortly before moving to Cherokee as pastor, I sat with Pastor Henry Mahan in Jim Byrd's house in Virginia. I was trying to pick his brain about what to expect in the pastorate, and he gave me much useful advice that I have endeavored to follow. One of the things he told me, which has served as a kind of mantra for me, was that it was not how I started out but how I ended that mattered. He quoted example after example of men in scripture, as well as some from his personal experience, that had begun well but ended in compromising the truth. He expressed his prayer to be that the



Lord would keep him established in the gospel and not suffer him to lose sight of his calling as he progressed in age.

His words have been a watchword for me, and they are never far from my mind as I stand behind the pulpit. Having been at this for a while, I have seen for myself that what he said was true, and of late, I have been concerned with some who seems to have embraced those who would have nothing to do with them had they not tempered their message. They have not denied the gospel, but something has happened that has caused those who despise the truth, who previously would have nothing to do with gospel preachers, to now be willing to join hands in some ecumenical pursuit. If the opposer's message has not changed, it must mean that they perceive that the message of the gospel preacher has. This will not end well, and the scriptures are replete with examples of those who in their early days showed great zeal for the truth but ended up appearing as apostates. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

Joash began like a flaming fire but ended as ashes in the hod. He zealously restored the temple, repaired the breaches, and restored temple worship. He removed and destroyed every vestige of Baal worship. He did not destroy the high places exalted by the people because they clung to the notion that they were closer to God, and this error could not be pried from their grasp. Yet, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to pen this accolade concerning Joash. "[He] did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days." But also, in verse 2, we have a caveat as the accolade is followed with the words "wherein Jehoiada, the priest instructed him." "All his days" applies to the time that Jehoiada was the king's counselor.

In our account in 2 Kings, we find Joash gathering all the things hallowed by previous kings, and those he had hallowed, and sending them to Hazael to bribe him from making war against Judah. The bribe worked, Hazael relented, and Joash preserved the kingdom for a little time. What could have

happened that caused this flaming light of God to abase himself and use these things designated for the worship of God as a bribe to save his hide. What has snuffed out the flame? In this passage the fact is reported but the reason is not. To see what happened we need to read verse 2 again and then turn to 2 Chron. 24:14-16.

2 Kings 12:2:

2, And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

2 Chron. 24:14-16

14, And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

15, But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.

16, And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house

All the days of Jehoiada have ended, and thus Joash “doing right in the sight of God” has likewise ended. Jehoiada is honored in his death and buried among the kings. In his death, he pictured Christ as King and High Priest. But Jehoiada’s death ended his counsel to King Joash. In the matter of salvation these offices will not bear separation. Yet, this is the very thing that religion has done since the beginning—divide and destroy. Religion speaks of Christ in glowing terms of universal love. They love their concept of His high priesthood but deny His regal sovereignty and absolute rights over them as King. If Christ is Savior, He is so because he is King and Lord.

His person and His work cannot be separated.

As soon as Jehoiada dies and no longer has the ear of the king, Joash begins his decline to what could only be referred to as apostasy. He bribed Hazael with things that belong to God and His worship, and now, in 2 Chron. 24:17-19, we see the consequences of Jehoiada's death.

2 Chron. 24:17-19

17, Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

18, And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

19, Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

The princes of Judah approach Joash the king and make obeisance to him. This means that they bowed before him in worship. To bow to the king in respect is one thing, but to worship him is altogether something else. When men bowed before angels in the scriptures, the angels' reply was "worship God!" (Rev. 19:10; 22:9<sup>1</sup>). But Joash *received* their worship and hearkened unto them. What they asked of the king is not clearly revealed, but their action that followed clearly intimate that they asked the king to relax the strictures of temple worship. Joash suffered them to worship idols, and wrath came upon Judah because of it. Joash began well, but his end was a disaster.

2 Chron. 24:23-25:

23, And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 19:10; 22:9,

from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

24, For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash.

25, And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

The “he” in 2 Chron. 24:19 is *not* Joash; it is the longsuffering God of Glory. In spite of their wicked idolatrous behavior, “yet, [God] sent prophets to them.” He did so to warn them of their doings and admonish them to return to true worship. Under the Old Covenant, this method was employed as it was a conditional covenant. Thank God that under the new covenant, God not only warns and admonishes, but by sovereign grace, He draws and brings His elect to Himself (John 6:44; 14:6<sup>1</sup>). In this passage the report is that they would not hear the prophets that God had sent (v. 19b).

Then the Spirit sent Zechariah, Jehoiada's son and he told the consequence of their sin.

2 Chron. 24:20:

20, And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

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<sup>1</sup> **John 6:44**, No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

**14:6**, Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Then Joash and the princes of Judah conspired against Zechariah and slew him in the temple.

2 Chron. 24:21-22:

21, And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.

22, Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it.

Our Lord may have referred to this in Matt. 23:35 when He scathed the Pharisees for their falseness (Matt. 23:29-36<sup>1</sup>).

In His dying moments Joash spoke prophetically of the doom of the princes of Judah and the wrath that would fall upon Judah. He did not remember the kindness of Jehoiada. He killed Jehoiada's son. Jehoiada's body rested with the kings, but Joash was not buried with the kings.

He began well but ended badly. May our prayer be, "Lord keep me" (Ps. 30:3<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 23:29-36**, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

<sup>2</sup> **Ps. 30:3**, O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

# GROVES

## 2 Kings 13:1-13

1, In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

2, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

3, And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all their days.

4, And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

5, (And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.

6, Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)

7, Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

8, Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

9, And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

10, In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years.

11, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein.

12, And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

13, And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

**T**he study of the history of the kings of Israel and Judah can be a little confusing because of the overlapping histories of the two kingdoms. We have seen Joash dead and buried, and will see it again in this text, and see him alive again in verse 14, and again in chapter 14. This is not a record of miraculous regeneration, but selected portions of his history that explains his interaction at different times with different men.

To make matters more interesting, we find two men of the same name ruling in verse 10, Joash in Judah and Jehoash in Israel. That said, these first thirteen verses are an historical precursor to the sickness and death of Elisha and his final prophesy in the latter part of this chapter. This back-and-forth takes some study, and in doing so, it can often cause us to lose sight of the fact that all of this, in some form or another, is designed to cause us to look to Christ.

Though application can be made to Christ, His works, and the salvation He wrought for His people in these varied accounts, one theme is often overlooked by the fact that there were two kingdoms. I cannot say this confusion of overlapping histories is by design for this purpose, but a particular effect that it has had on me is one of thanksgiving.

I am thankful that in the matter of salvation, there is but one king, one kingdom, one way, one truth and one life. There is no back-and-forth in the record of our salvation. There is no

deciphering of one kingdom playing into the life of another kingdom. There is no idolatrous king while at the same time a king who almost rids the kingdom of idolatry save for a few minor infractions. There is *one* king, and He is the King of kings. He alone is the salvation of His people by grace, and they are all idolaters by nature. But since their character and conduct are in no way considered or employed in their salvation, there can be no confusion in the matter lest man designs to make it confusing. No one is confused by *one* thing, but the introduction of a second thing always brings about confusion.

It requires no leap of imagination or intellectual prowess to see that the introduction of man's will, or man's law-works makes Christ to be only a part of the whole, and in that scenario, a minor player as to the result. Since free-will and works are attributed to men, it then stands to reason that man's insertion into salvation makes him to be Baal, the golden calves, and Ashtaroath. By nature, we are the idol that we worship, and confusion rules the day. Confusion engenders more confusion so that error is added to errors and lies to cover lies.

Grace becomes an offer rather than a sovereign act. Lordship becomes transference of power rather than the exercise of it. Sovereignty falls to the exercise of man's will rather than the will of God. God becomes like man and man becomes like God. Salvation becomes the act of man, and God's absolute role becomes but a bit part. The result of the conditional covenant, the two kingdoms, the power plays and intrigue of the kings, God's suffering a little error even among the good kings and their calling on God while worshipping idols (Acts 17:29-31<sup>1</sup>), is that it makes the *believer* to be thankful that *all* confusion has been removed in the matter of

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:29-31, Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.



God's salvation. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12; see also John 14:6; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph. 4:4-6<sup>1</sup>).

Absolute obedience on the part of man was never a consideration under the old covenant, so degrees of obedience were accepted. This was proved in that the Law and the ceremonies were *not* designed to take away sin (Heb. 10:11<sup>2</sup>). Rather, they were to *remind* men that they were yet sinners and in need of a sacrifice that would answer their inability and impotence to do anything about their sin (Heb. 10:1-4<sup>3</sup>).

The duplicity and vacillating attitude of the kings of both kingdoms serves to remind us that if salvation is to be successful, if salvation is even possible, it must be accomplished without any participation of mankind. It must be done entirely by one who cannot break a covenant. There is only one that fits the bill—Salvation is of the Lord!

That fact being established, there is also a pattern of behavior that occurs again and again as these various kings did right *or* wrong in the sight of the Lord.

Without exception, either the high places or the groves, and sometimes both, were retained. These groves were places designed and employed in the worship of false gods, notwithstanding the idols of Baal and Ashtarte had been destroyed. Though idols had been destroyed, the bent of the

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<sup>1</sup> **John 14:6**, Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

**1 Cor 8:6**, But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

**Eph. 4:4-6**, There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

<sup>2</sup> **Heb. 10:11**, And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

<sup>3</sup> **Heb. 10:1-4**, For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

idolatrous heart had not been altered at all. The idolatrous heart cannot abide with the idea that what they do is of no value. The manmade, hand-hewn deities were but rubble in the latrines and garbage heaps, and it was obvious the people could live without them. But the mind is an image factory, and the base thought that engenders idolatry, in whatever form it takes, is that the individual has something to *do*, some meritorious action that recommends the individual to their god.

Probably, the former Baal worshippers had merely transferred their practices to the worship of the true God. That little dram of error poisoned the *whole* batch, and though I am sure they would have claimed otherwise, their (so called) worship of the true God was pure *idolatry*. Anything that takes the mind and heart away from Christ as all of salvation is idolatry. The same sort of idolatry is prevalent in this day. Pagan symbols decorate the churches. Steeples, spires and obelisks are but ancient phallic symbols employed in the worship of the gods of fertility. Crosses date back to priesthoods that predate Christ by millenniums. Images of Christ are found in homes and adorn the walls of houses of worship. The unattractive Jew from Nazareth is painted with the broad brush of ethnicity to appear as a ruggedly handsome fellow with soulful countenance and tender eyes. Crucifixes made of gold and silver, works of artificers, are attached to varnished sticks, and these sacred lollipops are brandished as scepters or hung on walls to create little sanctums in the homes of the faithful. These are all idols, but religion calls them aides to worship, visual aids for those who *claim* to walk by faith and not by sight. For Israel and Judah, it was the *high places* and the *groves* that inserted them into their equation of salvation. Each of these places, in their own way, tell the true story of the error of salvation by free-will and works of righteousness.

The high places address man's need of self-exaltation and denote a need in man to be above others. They reveal the erroneous thought that altitude translates to proximity. Religion

speaks in this language. “The higher life,” the “higher plane of existence,” and the “upward way” are nothing but modern “high places.” The Utopian ideals of Plato, Marx, and all such counted on the false notion that natural man could become a spiritual person and reach a place of no place where man's natural self-interest would be sacrificed on the altar of collective good. The high places were where men could supposedly, by their will, rise above themselves to an estate that would make them accepted before God. They sing “Nearer my God to thee,” but they hold that they get there by their own vertical, gravity-overcoming trek. One poet said it right. “Nearer to God? Nearer I cannot be, for in His Son, I am as near as He.”

The groves address another mode of self-deification. The groves were dedicated to the worship of Ashtarte. Her name became transliterated to the English word Easter. Her holiday is the Spring Equinox and is about fertility replete with symbols of prolific reproduction such as the rabbit, the egg, lilies, and scrotal baskets full of delights. Her holiday was absorbed into so-called Christianity and attributed to the resurrection of Christ. Even her co-deity Baal was incorporated into her celebration with the practice of sunrise services. Baal was the Sun god. But the true worship of Ashtarte and the use of the groves is found in the meaning of the word “grove.” Groves get their name from Ashtarte who was held to be a consort of Baal. The derivative of that name *asherah* (“grove” comes from *ashar*) means “to go straight, to walk straight, to advance, to make progress.”

This progress is toward the place of *earned* acceptance with God. This religious practice in our day is called *progressive sanctification*, and it is supposedly accomplished by walking straight, living a life of progressive rectitude, living in a manner that would ultimately bring one to a place of holiness that would obligate God to accept them. They *may* speak of grace, but they utterly refuse to discount their works. The high places and the groves were maintained after the gods and their temples

were destroyed because the truth is, it is not God that matters in salvation, but the works and the will of men and their ability to reach that higher plane and be found accepted by God. They are not unlike Icarus, the son of Daedalus who, in escaping from Crete on artificial wings made for him by his father, flew so close to the Sun that the wax with which his wings were fastened melted, and he fell into the Aegean Sea. The *high places* and *groves* were places for men with wax wings to try to reach the Sun, and they will fall into the roiling depths of perdition. How great will be their fall!



## AND ELISHA DIED

### 2 Kings 13:14-21

14, Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

15, And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16, And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17, And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.

18, And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19, And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

20, And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

21, And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

**T**he end of Elisha's natural life has come. We find him first on his sick bed and at last a pile of miraculous bones. Here lies the "miracle prophet." He, by the power of God, has healed the sick and raised the dead.

The power to heal is big-money business in our day. Men claim to have it and make scads of cash duping folks into believing it. Though they give nominal creds to God, it is their charisma and showmanship that draws the crowds and lines their pockets with incredible amounts of filthy lucre.

Elisha made no attempt to heal himself—he had seen his day and was ready to leave this world. His sickness was not due to lack of faith but the appointed vehicle of his departure. He has witnessed his predecessor carried to glory on a chariot of fire. He has told the truth to mighty men at jeopardy of his own life. Here lies the servant of God, sick unto death, soon to rest in eternal bliss in the presence of Him who called him to this office. The sick bed is a special kind of school, a sacred classroom of personal matriculation, a place of contemplation, a sword that deals the final blow to the things of this world. I do not know the thoughts of Elisha as he lay dying, but I have sat at the bedside of many a dying saint, as well as many who never had an interest in Christ. Many things are common to the dying, but three things seem to attend them all.

The first is general weariness of life. Almost like scales, the cares of the world and thoughts of decaying possessions slough off and disappear.

Secondly, the remembrance of the word of God that describes the fleeting nature of natural life in metaphoric language that suggests but never quite defines the brevity of our existence on this earth comes to mind. Dying folks believe that life is a vapor, a few days passing faster than a weaver's shuttle.

Thirdly, as the eyes grow dim and the body begins to fail, there comes clarity of thought. Things come into clear perspective. Breaths and heartbeats become precious commodities. The need to forgive and be forgiven becomes an

urgent matter. Present kin and friends become more precious, and thoughts of those with whom we will be reunited brings warmth to the heart.

Joash's lament says so much (v. 14). When our beloved brothers and sisters pass, the world becomes a little lonelier. The church is one body, the flesh, bone, and blood of our Savior, and though men may take lightly this matter of being one flesh, we have but to ask any widow or widower if this truth is a trifle. I have buried many dear brethren, men and women who have helped me, changed my life for the better, and whose presence made this life sweeter and me better by their presence. I can say without equivocation that with each of their passings, the world has lost some of its charm, and thoughts of them make me feel a sense of loneliness and a hunger to see them once again. I do not long to die, but the consideration of death does not stir up fear in me. Rather, to some degree, it stirs a sense of anticipation.

The prophet is dying and yet his spirit is not diminished. The lamentations of Joash are the *same* words that Elisha spoke as he watched Elijah ascend to glory (v. 14; 2 Kings 2:12<sup>1</sup>). The words of Joash are, in part, spoken as a lamentation of his own troubles. Syria is hard on his trail; war is imminent, and Elisha knows it weighs heavily on Joash's mind.

Elisha immediately assumes his role as a prophet, and though weak, infirm, and near to death, he shows himself capable of encouragement and anger (v. 15-19). He told Joash to take up a bow and arrows. As Joash took the bow, Elisha put his hands on the hands of Joash. He did this to signify that the destination of the quarrel and its success was in the hands of the Lord, not the skill of Joash or the strength of Elisha. After opening a window facing eastward, he told Joash to shoot, and the divinely guided missile flew to its preordained target. Then

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Kings 2:12**, And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.



Elisha told Joash the meaning of what had just been done.

The arrow shot signified that Joash would defeat the army of Syria that was in array against him. By what takes place afterward, it is somewhat evident that Joash got what he came for. Though his words and tears over Elisha were sincere, it is apparent that he came to Elisha for help against Syria. Now that he had it, he was less zealous for what followed. Elisha told Joash to take the remaining arrows and smite the floor with them. Joash smote the floor three times and ceased. Elisha's reaction requires us to read between the lines and refers to Joash's response to the requirement. Since he came up short on the smiting, it appears that he was less than enthusiastic in his obedience.

Though he was not given a number, the good news of his upcoming victory ought to have filled his veins with a surge of adrenalin, and thus he would have continued thrusting the arrows in the floor until he was told to stop. But his lack of enthusiasm became a prophecy in itself. Elisha, prophet and patriot, by his anger, revealed the heart of Joash and his lack of fervor that cemented and limited the number of battles in which he would prove victorious. Elisha was done.

Verse 20 speaks in the simplest of language. This is the universal epitaph, "And Elisha died." His work done, his purpose accomplished, the miracle prophet goes to his long home, awakening in the arms of Christ. His name will be employed again and again in the New Testament as our Lord and his disciples refer to the things he said and did. He being dead, yet speaketh, and his words and deeds are as iron. He died. And they buried him.

The final sentence in verse 20 belongs to what follows. In the year that Elisha died and was buried, the Moabite marauders came for their yearly plunder in which they robbed, killed, and took what they wanted. Their merciless marauding interrupts a funeral procession, and the pallbearers, in fear for their life, sought to quickly dispose of the body (v. 21). As

Elisha's tomb was nearest to them, they rolled the stone away from the tomb and cast the body on the bones of Elisha. When the dead body touched the bones of the prophet, he was resurrected from the dead and stood up on his feet.

Here again, the language is simple. There is no record of the reaction of the pallbearers or even of the man that was revived because this record is not about any of them. It is about Elisha's *God* and his *sovereign power* over life and death. The last miracle of Elisha proved, once and for all, that the power did not belong to him. It was not personal power—"power belongeth to the Lord" (Psa. 62:11). That is why we read that the Apostle Paul's shadow healed many, as did the cloth with which he wiped his brow. Miracles are the sole property of the Lord, and he uses human instruments by which His Spirit does the impossible. Dead men can do nothing. Lifeless bones possess neither life nor power, but nothing is too hard for God.

It would do us well to remember that those dry bones are a description of the power of human nature and even the power of the blood bought sinner. We are "dead," so sayeth the Lord, and our "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Faith is not power; it is the confession that we have none. But the God of all glory is not restricted or frustrated to any degree. So, if what we do or have done seems to have positive effect, remember that it was just God causing some soul to bump into our dead bones.

To Him be glory, now and forever. Amen.



## COVENANT MERCIES

### 2 Kings 13:22-25

22, But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

23, And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

24, So Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad his son reigned in his stead.

25, And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

**T**hese verses record the fulfillment of the prophecy that Joash made when he smote the ground three times and was told by Elisha he would defeat Syria three times (v. 25c). The Lord always fulfills His promises, and the measure of His prophets is that what they prophesy always comes to pass. The mark of the false prophet is that he may get it right some of the time but not every time. When God gives His prophets a word, it *always* comes to pass. All the promises of God are “yea and amen” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

However, an underlying and overriding principle in every episode of the life of the nation of Israel is the covenant mercies they received as the elect nation of God. We know that the election of Israel was typical as to kind. Their election was not to salvation but illuminates the condition and kind of people that God has elected unto salvation. A number within that

nation were elected unto salvation, but the *whole* nation revealed that election unto salvation was the election of grace. A cursory study of the nation of Israel's history, as reported in the Bible, reveals there was nothing about them that could induce God to show them kindness. They were exemplars of the undeserving. They were the definition of rebellion. They were bent toward idolatry, quick to murmur, complain, and generally a dissatisfied horde of miscreants. God had supplied their every need for forty years in the wilderness, a trek that would have taken but eleven days had they not rebelled on the first steps of their sojourn. He had sacrificed nations for their security! "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee" (Isa. 43:3). He had freely given them a land of milk and honey, and houses they did not build, livestock they did not raise, gardens they neither tilled nor hoed, and the promise of a bright future if they were obedient.

To all of this they turned up their noses, two and one-half of the tribes refusing to enter the Promise Land at all, and no sooner had the remainder inhabited the land, they became steeped in idolatry and various forms of rebellion. In many cases, the pagan nations that surrounded them had a better moral compass than they.

This is the nation that God has chosen to reveal the *kind* of people he had chosen unto salvation. Those who have been recipients of the election of grace have been given a glimpse of what they are by nature, and they look at Israel and find an extensive and accurate catalogue of their own depravity. It is no wonder that self-sufficient, self-righteous, morally upright religion balks at the mention of the election of grace. They simply cannot countenance a salvation that was freely bestowed on the likes of this unworthy rabble.

But it is precisely for the glory of His grace that God has chosen this kind of people. He will show to all that He loves unconditionally, saves those who have no merit at all, and He

has accomplished it all for Christ's sake (Eph. 1:3-6<sup>1</sup>). These wretched sinners have been chosen before the world began in the covenant of Grace, wherein God the Father and God the Son contracted to save them. God chose them—Christ died for them to satisfy the law, and the Holy Spirit made them aware of what had been freely given them in this wondrous covenant of gracious promise. God saves them, informs them of their condition and estate, and even fixes that through regeneration they will ask Him for it (Ezek. 36:21-32, 37<sup>2</sup>).

Though the prophecy of three victories has come to pass, before that takes place, God reveals the underlying reason the prophecy was fulfilled. Once again, we view Israel, not in the depth and breadth of their depravity, but through the eyes of grace. Every deliverance whether natural or spiritual reveals the salvation of the sinner. Rather than view the sinners as rebels,

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<sup>1</sup> **Eph. 1:3-6**, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

<sup>2</sup> **Ezek. 36:21-32**, But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the LORD God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the LORD God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

**37**, Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

they are accounted as “oppressed,” infirm, imprisoned, pitiful, dying, or dead—traits that invoke pity, empathy, and sympathy (v. 22). We must always remember that how God views a thing is how it really is. Religion refuses to accept this fact believing that character and conduct must play into God's view of men. The believer has but to consider his own carnality, and he will be filled with “joy unspeakable and full of glory” that God has considered him as a needy, oppressed, and sick soul.

Verse 23 is as perfect a demonstration of covenant mercies as can be found in all of Holy Writ (except for 2 words). Here is the reason for the existence of the world and all that is therein—the glory of God's grace.

Six things:

1. *The LORD was gracious unto them.* Immediately we are made to know that things are going to turn out well for them, and they did not merit what was being done for them. This is for God's glory and His divine prerogative. “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious” (Exo. 33:19). Grace is sovereign, free, uncalled for, unsought, and unstoppable. God was gracious unto them.

2. He “*had compassion on them.*” He felt their dire circumstances in *His* heart (Ps. 103:10-14; Mark. 5:19; Heb. 4:15<sup>1</sup>).

3. “He *had respect unto them.*” We know that God is “no respecter of persons,” but the times where this truth is stated has to do with the glory of His grace. He does not exercise grace or mercy because he finds something respectable in

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<sup>1</sup> **Ps. 103:10-14**, He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

**Mark. 5:19**, Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

**Heb. 4:15**, For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

someone. “Respect,” as translated here, has nothing to do with supposed *esteem*. It literally means to “turn and look.” Again, it is the view of God that counts. The word suggests that God took notice of their plight, and though they did not deserve it, they found grace in His sight. He looked on them in mercy.

4. “*He would not destroy them*” (John 5:56<sup>1</sup>). When God will *not* do something, He will not do it. God will not destroy those for whom Christ died. They are safe in the arms of His grace. The word “destroy” suggests that destruction was an imperative and intimates what they deserved. One does not make an oath to “not destroy” if destruction is not on the table. Why else even mention destruction?

5. “*Neither cast He them from His presence.*” The words “as yet” (the “two words” mentioned above) apply to the fact that this is an election of a nation as a type and not election unto salvation. “As yet” means this gracious act was for this *particular* incident. The election of grace is never attended with such a disclaimer. You will never find any word that implies probability, or anything less than eternity attached to the doctrine of salvation by grace. Our Lord said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. . . I am with thee always, even to the end of the earth.”

John 10:26-30.

26, But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28, And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29, My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30, I and my Father are one.

There is a big difference between “I will not destroy them,

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<sup>1</sup> John 5:56,



neither cast them from my presence as yet” and “I will remember their sins no more.”

6. Finally, God gives the reason for this deliverance and pictures the reason for our salvation. It is “because of the covenant;” not the Noahic covenant, not the covenant of Sinai, but the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:4-6; 17:19; 21:10-12; Rom. 9:6-13<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **Gen. 12:1-3**, Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

**15:4-6**, And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

**17:19**, And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

**21:10-12**, Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

**Rom. 9:6-13**, Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The believer is saved because God made a covenant within Himself to save him (Deut. 9:4-6<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **Deut. 9:4-6**, Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.



# PRESUMPTION

## 2 Kings 14:1-20

1, In the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah.

2, He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

3, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did.

4, Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.

5, And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father.

6, But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

7, He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

8, Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face.

9, And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

10, Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of this, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?

11, But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Bethshemesh, which belongeth to Judah.

12, And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents.

13, And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Bethshemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

14, And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15, Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

16, And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

17, And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

18, And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

19, Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.

20, And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.

**T**his passage records Amaziah's reign, his rise, his victory, his presumption, his fall, and his death. He began his reign well and like many of the kings, ended it poorly. It is recorded that he did what was "right in the sight of the Lord" (v. 3) but with two caveats.

The first is found in the phrase, "yet not like David his father." This has to do with the spirit and heart that attended his "right" doings. He did what was right but as matter of *duty*. His doing right was not out of a zeal for the glory of God nor out of a heart of love toward God. He followed in his father Joash's footsteps as a dutiful son.

The second caveat has been attributed to many of the kings which we have studied. He did not take away the high places where pagan and true worship were mixed, and therefore, true worship was nullified.

Several things are revealed in these points of interest.

First, doing your duty is a good thing, but our Lord said that having done all your duty you are a most "unprofitable servant" (Luke 17:10). This simply means that all duty is *reasonable* service and not to be accounted as worthy of notice or merit. One can do his duty from a legal perspective, think himself special and that he has met some criteria of holiness and rectitude, when in fact, his legal obedience added up to zero. Amaziah was careful in his legal duty, and under the Old Covenant, that is what was required. But even under the Old Covenant, the greatest principle of the law was to love God with all your heart, and since love can never be legally accomplished, without love every duty is unprofitable.

Duty without love may serve to make civil and societal dealings better, but it does nothing for the inner man as it flows only from the strength of the flesh. Love adds color, life, vitality, and turns duty into privilege. Our best efforts are fraught with sin and the flesh, and *every* believer grieves over his lack of love for Christ. We thank God that there was *One* who did all that He accomplished out of love for the father, fulfilled

the law in every jot and tittle for the glory of God, as a bored-in-the-ear bondservant who voluntarily served his master because he loved His master and His master's family. He achieved it all as the representative of the elect, and therefore their works are accepted in Him.

We see again that under the old covenant partial obedience was partially recognized but played no part in salvation. Though Amaziah did not remove the high places and did what he did without a heart of love for Christ, he was still accounted as having done what was right in the sight of the Lord. We can relate to this half-heartedness and legal persuasion, as it is the nature of our flesh. Again, we thank God that the Lord offered perfect obedience from a zealous heart of love, and He did it in our room and stead.

We get a further glimpse of Amaziah's legal motivation to obey the law in verses 5-6. Though it is not stated that he brought those he "slew" before a court of law for adjudication and sentence, the fact that he would not slay their sons because the law prohibited it, certainly suggests that the slaying of those who killed his father was done through legal channels. He was a man that sought to do right by the law.

Verse 7 is a synoptic account of His victory over Edom in the valley of salt, but there is much more involved in the story.

It is recorded more fully in 2 Chron. 25:5-12

5, Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield.

6, He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

7, But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD is not

with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim.

8, But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down.

9, And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

10, Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

11, And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

12, And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces.

Here we see that in preparation to go against Edom he gathered an army from Judah and hired 100,000 mercenaries from Israel for 100 talents of silver. When the prophet of the Lord confronted him, he was told to dismiss the 100,000 hirelings and battle only with the army of Judah, and the Lord would rout his enemies before him. Amaziah evidently believed the prophet concerning the victory but was put off by the fact that he had put up 100 talents of silver and was going to lose it. But the prophet assured him that the Lord was able to give him more than he had spent.

Another thing that is left out of the account in 1 Kings is that the 100,000 mercenaries were angry and set about to plunder the cities of Judah, murdering 3,000 on their way home to Israel.

Back in our text, we find Amaziah had taken Selah and renamed the city Joktheel. “Joktheel” means “obedience to the



Lord.” Here we see the first hints of Amaziah's presumption, as is usually the case with legalists. He was as much as boasting that he had obeyed the Lord, and that it was worthy of recognition.

Verse 8 further illuminates Amaziah's presumption and pride. But here again, some important details are not recorded for us in 2 Kings. Amaziah did something on his trip home that caused the Lord's anger to be kindled against Him. After he proclaimed obedience to the Lord, we can see the extent of his pride and lack of love for God and His glory. In 2 Chron. 25:14-16, we see Amaziah's heart revealed.

14, Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

15, Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

16, And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbare, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

He brought foreign pagan idols onto Judah's soil and bowed down and worshipped them. The Lord was angered and sent him a prophet, and Amaziah as much as told him to shut up or die. So, when we have the account in 1 Kings of Amaziah's challenge to the king of Israel, he was already marked for death. His manifestation of pride was a step in the ordained course of his demise.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Some have conjectured that Amaziah's challenge to Jehoash for a tête-à-tête was for revenge against the 100,000 for the slaughter they had done. This may be the case, but the motivating factor for Amaziah's boldness was his recent victory over Edom. He fancied himself an unstoppable force. Jehoash's response was clever—sarcastic mockery. He painted two characters on his canvas, a thistle (little thorn) and a Cedar of Lebanon, a mighty tree (v. 9). He told Amaziah that even if he had come in peace and offered his daughters hand in marriage, he would be rejected because Jehoash was a cedar and Amaziah was a thistle, and even such a plea of peace would be rejected. Why? Because Amaziah was so far beneath Jehoash that such a thing was not even feasible—high class and no class. The result of this challenge would be as if a giant beast trampled underfoot the tiny thistle. In short, the challenge was ill conceived and would meet with sad result.

Jehoash further insulted Amaziah in verse 10. To paraphrase, “Amaziah, you've had your little victory—your feeling puffed up, mighty and invincible. Just be satisfied with that, enjoy you 15 minutes, and milk it for all the glory you can get out of it. If your pride is your shield when it meets my sword, you and Judah will suffer defeat.”

Amaziah would not hear it and the cost of his pride was great. Judah's army turned tail and ran. Amaziah was captured and brought to Jerusalem where the wall was torn down, and the place was looted of all its riches. The beast of Lebanon trampled the thistle of Judah. Later Jehoash died and his son Jeroboam reigned in his stead. Amaziah lived 15 years after Jehoash died and then was conspired against and slain. The lesson is a simple one.

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth

wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. “(Prov. 6:16-17).

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12)

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3)

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:10-11).

## JEROBOAM AND AZARIAH

### 2 Kings 14:21-15:7

2 Kings 14:

21, And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.

22, He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

23, In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years.

24, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25, He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.

26, For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

27, And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

28, Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

29, And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

## 2 Kings 15:

1, In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign.

2, Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem.

3, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done;

4, Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

5, And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's son was over the house, judging the people of the land.

6, And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

7, So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

**T**his passage begins and ends with Azariah, with a dose of Jeroboam in the middle. In verses 21-22 is a short blip concerning the coronation and death of Azariah with mention of his building of Elath and bringing it back under the rule of Judah. Azariah's story is picked up again in 2 Kings 15, 2 Chronicles 26, and is the basis for Isaiah chapter 6.

Before the Lord reintroduces us to Azariah, we have the record of Jeroboam who was mentioned in verse 16. Jeroboam, the first, made the golden calves and his epitaph is repeated many times as the man who “made Israel to sin.” Evidently, though his name was a curse to God, it was held in high esteem in Israel, which gives us some sense of how steeped in idolatry and worship of the calves they were. As his father before him, he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He is accredited with restoring the coast of Israel, and some Jewish historians say

that he returned the property to Judah, but that is not established in scripture. It is also said that Jeroboam saved Israel in other battles which probably occurred when he was recovering the coast.

The interesting part of this record of Jeroboam's reign is found in verses 25-27. This deliverance was said to be according to the word of the Lord as spake by His servant Jonah (v. 25c). The reason for the deliverance was the merciful heart of the Lord (vv. 26-27). This Jonah is the same as the Lord sent to Nineveh. He was from Gathhepher, which is in Galilee. His origin is interesting because in the days of our Lord's ministry, the Pharisees, trying to discredit the Savior, asked him, “. . . Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (John 7:52). Either willingly or ignorantly, they sought to disallow the Lord by denying the historical account of the Lord's merciful deliverance of Israel at the word of a Galilean prophet, all in order to discount the words of Christ the Prophet.

Then in chapter 15 we pick up with Azariah who “did right in the eyes of the Lord . . . save that the high places were not removed” (vv. 3-4). Azariah is known by another name, one that believers are more familiar with, Uzziah. The account of this king is summarized in verse 5. The Lord smote Him with leprosy.

The record of that is found in 2 Chron. 26:1-23. Uzziah was a great king who did what was right in the sight of the Lord. But as we have seen in the past studies, those that begin well do not always end well. Strength and power do not generally work to subdue the nature of the flesh. Just the opposite is true and is especially evident in the life of Uzziah.

The Lord raised him up, and the Lord put him down. In the end he was alone, and his son Jotham was running the kingdom. He was not buried with the kings because he was a leper. Instead, he was buried in ground purchased for the kings but not the sepulchers of the kings.

There are two very important verses that give reason for Uzziah's fall.

The first is found in the last phrase of 2 Chron. 26:5; "As long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper." These words are an indication that what follows in the glorious report of Uzziah and his pursuits will not necessarily have a good end.

The second is an illumination of that cautious phrase and is found in 2 Chron. 26:15-16, "...til he was strong, but when he was strong."

#### 2 Chron. 26:16-23

16, But when he was strong, [Uzziah's] heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17, And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men:

18, And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.

19, Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

20, And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

21, And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

22, Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did

Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.

23, So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

Uzziah sought to play the part that belonged only to the Messiah. He sought to be king and priest, and God made him a leper, an outcast and recluse that spent his days in shame and hiding.

The effect of this episode upon Isaiah was profound. It seems that Isaiah was a kind of biographer of the deeds of Uzziah and perhaps a little in awe of him (2 Chron. 26:22). But when Uzziah was turned to a leper, the rough and tough prophet learned a mighty lesson about invested interest in men and holiness of God manifest.

In Isaiah 6 it is evident that Isaiah's eyes were still on Uzziah when the Lord struck him with leprosy. When the Lord reduced this great king, whose fame had gone abroad like wildfire, to an outcast and a pariah, Isaiah saw "also the Lord." In his view was a fallen hero and the Holy God. The accomplishments of Uzziah suddenly amounted to nothing, and Isaiah was confronted with his own words "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils" (Isa. 2:22) This venture of Uzziah to be both king and priest had come to a terminal end, and Isaiah's vision became very clear.

Who might have done such a thing? How could such a mighty warrior and king be brought so low. Only a mightier king could manage such a deed, and Isaiah saw who He was. He saw the Lord on the throne, exalted—"high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1). "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. 11:4). Isaiah saw the Lord's train filled the temple from pillar to post, signifying the high priest's robe.

*This* enthroned is truly King and Priest. *This* King is not



discouraged by anyone (2 Chron. 26:17-18). He is attended by those who proclaim His glory (the six-winged beasts in Isa. 6:2). They have but one message, one song to sing; one lyric to endlessly repeat (Isa. 6:3<sup>1</sup>). Holiness and glory are the revelation of *why* Uzziah is smitten with leprosy. God honors his Son and will countenance no rival to Him, least of all one whom He has made strong to use the strength He has given to blaspheme the name of Him who is the one true King and Priest. When the Lord spoke, the whole temple shook. This might be in reference to the earthquake that was placed in the time frame of Uzziah's reign (Zech. 14:5; Amos 1:1<sup>2</sup>). Metaphorically it probably applies to the effect of the preaching of the gospel that was said to turn the world upside down. The smoke that filled the temple could refer to the anger of God as revealed in His action against Uzziah, or the smoke that filled the holy place on the Day of Atonement. In any case, it blinded the eye to all but Him who sat on the throne.

The response of Isaiah is the same with any and everyone who sees the Lord in His holiness (Isa. 6:5-13<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 6:3**, And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

<sup>2</sup> **Zech. 14:5**, And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

**Amos 1:1**, The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

<sup>3</sup> **Isa. 6:5-13**, Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it

# DISOBEDIENCE

## 2 Kings 15:8-31

8, In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months.

9, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

10, And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

11, And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

12, This was the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass.

13, Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

14, For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

15, And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

16, Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

17, In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel,

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shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

and reigned ten years in Samaria.

18, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

19, And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

20, And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

21, And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

22, And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.

23, In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years.

24, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25, But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

26, And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

27, In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

28, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

29, In the days of Pekah king of Israel came

Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

30, And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

31, And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

**H**ere we find a record of the many ill-fated kings that occupied the throne of Israel during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah. During this time, Uzziah was smitten with leprosy for presuming that, as king, he had the sovereign right to be priest. He filled the censer and went before the golden altar to offer incense. This activity was prohibited for any except the Aaronic priesthood because it pictured the intercessory work of Christ in the salvation of the elect. Christ *alone* was both king and priest, and Uzziah's arrogant offense resulted in him being made a leprous pariah for the remainder of his days.

Uzziah lived in obscurity, going from apartment to apartment so as not to be seen in his shame and disgrace. During that time, his son Jotham was viceroy and did the business of sovereign until the death of Uzziah, whereupon he reigned in the stead of his father. The leprous king was still the king, but his reign was nominal. Uzziah's actions were an affront to Christ but a gift of grace to the believer as his actions revealed the oneness of Christ and his church. That gift of grace is that the believer is freely made to be what was prohibited to Uzziah. “[Christ] hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:10). The believer is predestinated to be “conformed to the image” of Christ (Rom. 8:29). How glorious is that conformity that we are made to be

like Him in His unique office of king and priest! That for which Uzziah was punished is made the blessing of the elect by *grace*!

As we consider this dukes mixture of royals, we are reminded again of the carnal nature that abides in us all and are confronted with the wonder of grace. There is very little difference between any of these kings, and every one of the kings in this passage are void of redeeming qualities. They are only fit to remind us that there is nothing in man, even in regal men, that could ever recommend them to God.

Their rebellion and disobedience are the common traits that unites every man and woman that is born into this world. They serve to remind us of our depravity—in no uncertain terms. Men and women may seek to rise above their natural bent, and some may meet with degrees of natural success. I applaud any effort of any man to be a better person, to live a moral life, to be altruistic and philanthropic, and to seek to be selfless. Society benefits from such, and such efforts make more jail cells available in the penitentiary for those who seek a life outside the law. But the best efforts and notable successes never rise above the natural, and anything short of spiritual perfection is wholesale sin and worthy of eternal death.

Nothing, *nothing* done in the natural will ever rise to the spiritual. No deed, no matter how thoughtfully pursued or successfully executed, can ever be anything but sin enrobed in carnal finery. There can be no doubt that these kings were sinful and that they pursued with vigor the pleasures found in the deeds of the flesh. However, their various debaucheries are not categorized or even named. It is said of each that “they did evil in the sight of the Lord,” and that categorization properly names the source of all sins—evil.

Evil is a spiritual term as it represents all that is not God and not *of* God. Evil is the opposite of God; God is good. When we see that word “evil” in scripture, we are not to think of the works of the flesh but of the hearts and thoughts of men that are evil continually. Though the world was destroyed by

flood, that great punishment did not change the minds and hearts of men, and no punishment ever will (Gen. 6:5; 8:20-21; Isa. 1:5<sup>1</sup>). The only thing spiritual about nature is spiritual darkness—evil.

The word “spiritual” has fallen on hard times in this day. Any act of kindness or selflessness, any exercise of ethereal pursuit is called spiritual, and of late, has been more and more attributed to godliness. Without Christ, it is all simply different ways to perish. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Man has a spirit, a spiritual side, but it is a denizen of darkness, an aspect of his carnality, and his pursuits will lead him further toward the pit. God prophesied the day when men would call evil good and good evil, and that hour has long since arrived.

So, as I look at the kings of Israel, I am reminded of my own doomed condition as I was born into this world. I was born doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and cannot alter my course nor change what I am. If something is not done for me, I will continue my career till I leave this world for an eternity separated from God. As the leopard cannot “change his spots” nor an “Ethiopian his skin,” neither can I who am “accustomed to do[ing] evil,” do good (Jer. 13:23). What righteousness to which I may think I have attained is but a heap of menstruous rags in the sight of the thrice Holy God.

My heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and I cannot plumb the depths of its ruin. The report given of these kings of Israel reads like a list of my symptomatic malady. Search as I

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<sup>1</sup> **Gen. 6:5**, And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

**8:20-21**, And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

**Isa. 1:5**, Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

may, I can find not one whit of anything in me that is acceptable. I am born without hope. But this ever-present knowledge of my condition, and the screaming banshee in my bosom that is my conscience serves to make me thankful and is full of praise for the *unconditional* grace of God. And I can thank God for every honest report that men, at their best and worst, are naturally without hope.

Think with me again of what God has done for us in His sovereign grace. I live in a body that grows weaker by the day. My natural spirit is full of sin, wracked with iniquity and possessed with a transgressors heart. That has not changed and will not until this body with its natural enmity enters the grave—the enmity never to rise again. On May 24, 1844, Samuel Finley Breese Morse sent a message over a newly constructed telegraph line between Baltimore Maryland and the old Supreme Court chamber in the Capitol building in Washington DC. He felt such exhilaration at the advent of this new technology (Morse Code) that the message he sent was a quote from Numbers 23:23. The message was just four words and is on display at the Library of Congress. The message tapped out in dots and dashes was, “What God hath wrought.” What God has wrought for His elect is beyond what our poor souls could think or imagine.

The vileness of our flesh has never been a consideration to God. Before the world began, ere man first rebelled, and before he willfully disobeyed God, our gracious sovereign had chosen a people for Himself. He and His Son covenanted to pay their sin debt by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ would be made sin for His elect and they would be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 cor. 5:21). All things—*all things*—everything necessary for the salvation of the elect was set in the eternal purpose and will of God. No issue was left un-addressed; no sin was left un-remitted. Christ, Himself, would become the righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption of His people (1 Cor.

1:30<sup>1</sup>). At the appointed time, Christ the Lord left glory, came to this earth, and died in the room and stead of His elect—sinners and ungodly all. With that death, God's law was satisfied, justice was answered, and the law and justice have no ground upon which to accuse those for whom Christ died.

The law and justice are not the enemies of the elect; they, with one voice, declare the believer has no charge against him, nor can any ever be laid against him. In time, according to God's purpose, God the Holy Spirit awakened these helpless ruined ones with the gospel, and they were conclusively informed that Christ has accomplished their redemption, and they *were* saved. They did not ask for it, nor did they seek God for it, but when it was revealed to them, they never ceased to desire it.

And what do we have—we whose existence mirrors that of all these kings that have done evil in the sight of the Lord? We have it *all*. God has loved us and drawn us to Him. He has “saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). We stand before Him as blessed children, spotless babes, accepted, embraced, and without sin in His all-seeing eyes. We have done nothing and will never do anything to *ever* affect, or that *will ever* affect, our happy estate. Our nature has not changed from our birth, yet we are fully received in the presence of God. And all we can do is thank God for His grace and praise him forever for seeing us as we cannot see ourselves. Our Lord presents us to the father as a living offering saying “Behold, I and the children that you have given me...I am not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11, 13).

Finally, the rehearsal of the sinful lives of these kings ought to make us abstain from looking to ourselves. Even as redeemed sinners, there is nothing there that will help us or can help us. “I

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Cor. 1:30**, But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:



will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber” (Psa. 121:2-3).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 1:24-25).

## JOTHAM'S REIGN

### **2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27:1-9**

2 Kings 15:

32, In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

33, Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

34, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

35, Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.

36, Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

37, In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.

38, And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles 27:

1, Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

2, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

3, He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and

on the wall of Ophel he built much.

4, Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

5, He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.

6, So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

7, Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

8, He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

9, And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

**H**ere in 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 27 is the record of the reign of Jotham, son of Uzziah. For all practical purposes, Jotham has reigned as viceroy since his father was smitten with leprosy. The governmental aspects of reigning are solidly in his grasp. The accomplishments of his reign have to do with his respect for the temple worship, building what would come to be known as the eastern gate, and erecting cities and towers for the safety and protection of the people of his kingdom. His reign as king lasted 16 years, and as opposed to the numerous kings in the previous part of chapter 15, it is recorded of Jotham that he “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. . . according to all that his father Uzziah had done” (v. 34)

Here is the mark of grace, the kindness of our God. Though Uzziah made a horrible and lamentable error, an error that brought him to shame and a sad end, God has the writer record him in the best light, the light of mercy and grace. This

is always the case when God speaks of his people and reasonably so because He has, by the work of Christ, forgotten their sin.

“All that Uzziah had done” does not refer to his blasphemous presumption, but to the good he did while he sought the Lord. The few kings of whom this is said form a little oasis in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah. Amid all the recorded depravity, idolatry, and evil, there are yet those kings that follow in the footsteps of David. It is because God has never left himself without a witness, whether it is a king that does right, or an uncompromising prophet, or a faithful priest during the times of evil kings. God makes men to know His presence in the midst of His people. Even when God led His people into captivity, He did not suffer them to be without a witness to His power and majesty.

We can be thankful that though we are, by nature, like the evil kings, we are never without the presence of God in our midst, and that blessed presence is not contingent upon our obedience but based entirely on the obedience of Christ our Lord. He is our faithful Prophet, Priest, and King, and as He who cannot lie, He has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

The singular indictment against the kings who did right is again repeated concerning Jotham (v. 35). It appears that the high places had become so imbedded in the minds of the people that their employment in worship became a matter of accepted and common practice, and though the indictment is repeated and carries no less weight with its repetition, it seems the high places had entered the intractable realm of tradition. Tradition is almost always the bane of true worship, but it is, apart from an act of sovereign grace, impossible to remove. Not all traditions are bad, but tradition and grace cannot walk hand in hand. These *high* places represented, to the people who used them, a status that exceeded that of the common believer and could only translate as self-righteousness before God.

God is worshipped from a *low* place, a place of humility

and meekness. When men are confronted with God in scripture, they take up headquarters in the dust. They do not speak to Him or of Him in the language of familiarity or equality but rather in reverence and awe, respect, and worship. Religious tradition has turned true worship into frivolity and entertainment of the flesh rather than the exaltation of Christ. The high places remain, and in the mind of those who worship there, it is the way it is to be done.

This ends the record of Jotham in 2 Kings. Verse 37 is an introductory statement about what occurred in Ahaz's reign after Jotham died.

To see more at the reign of Jotham let us see 2 Chronicles 27.

In verse 2 we have the same account as we had in 2 Kings, but with a bit of clarification. Jotham did right as his father did, "howbeit, he entered not into the temple of the Lord." He was not presumptuous as was his father. He did not seek or assume the office of the priest. The corruption of the people referred to in the last phrase is the revelation of God's thoughts toward the worship going on in the high places. It was corrupt worship and in no way glorified God. The traditions of men, as they relate to worship, are corrupt because after a time they are set forth as if they were sanctioned by God, or even worse, the word of God (Matt. 15:1-9<sup>1</sup>).

Verses 3-4 demonstrate Jotham's care for the glory of God and the good of the people. Concerning the glory of God, he built the high gate or eastern gate. This gate was built by

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 15:1-9**, Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Solomon, and Jotham is said to have beautified it. What he built on the wall of Ophel is up for conjecture. Historians say that it might have been a high place, but that is unlikely. Others vary from an addition to Solomon's porch. The Targum said it was a palace. Jewish tradition holds that it was the Holy of Holies. Whatever the building was, it was for the worship of the Lord and the glory of His name.

The cities, castles, and towers that Jotham built throughout the landscape were for the safety and dwelling of shepherd's and the people. In verse 4, He used his sovereignty for the glory of God and the good of his people (Est. 10:3<sup>1</sup>). Sovereignty is never sweeter than when it is seen in the tender care of its subjects. Jotham warred against the Ammonites and defeated them, and they paid tribute to the victor (v. 5).

In verse 6 we see the reason why Jotham did what was right in the sight of the Lord. The account of Jotham's father, Uzziah, is the same account given Jotham. (2 Chron. 26:4-5<sup>2</sup>). Jotham became mighty because he prepared (established, ordered) his ways before the Lord His God. He made his royal decisions based on the word of God and His revealed will. Unlike his father, when the Lord made him strong, he did not lift up his heart to destruction. God made Uzziah strong, but his flesh translated that strength to mean that he had risen to this power by his own potency. Jotham believed God. He measured what he did with belief in God's faithfulness (Rom. 4:20-21<sup>3</sup>). Jotham's strength was born of dependence on God, not himself. To depend on God is essentially a confession of

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<sup>1</sup> **Est. 10:3**, For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

<sup>2</sup> **2 Chron. 26:4-5**, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

<sup>3</sup> **Rom. 4:20-21**, He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

our own inability (Prov. 3:5-6<sup>4</sup>).

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<sup>4</sup> **Prov. 3:5-6**, Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

# THE REIGN OF AHAZ

## 2 Kings 16:1-20

1, In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

2, Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father.

3, But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

4, And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5, Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.

6, At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

7, So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

8, And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

9, And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

10, And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the



fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

11, And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

12, And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

13, And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.

14, And he brought also the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

15, And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

16, Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17, And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

18, And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

19, Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20, And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

**T**he reign of Ahaz is recorded here and in 2 Chronicles. He did not follow the example of his father David, or even of his immediate father, Jotham. He did not prepare his way before the Lord but went entirely the way of idolatry, as did the kings of Israel. Unlike the former kings of Judah, who allowed and covertly promoted idolatry and “did not that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,” Ahaz appeared to *openly* partake and practice paganism with zeal, and perhaps even played at the offices of king and priest.

Verses 3 and 4 give a full account of the depths of idolatry into which Ahaz plunged Judah. The first abomination mentioned is that he made his sons pass through the fire of Molech. This was *not* the sacrifice to Moloch that entailed heating of the idol Moloch until its outstretched hands were red hot and then placing live children into the superheated hands and burning them alive. When the babies began to scream in pain the priests of Moloch would beat drums loudly so that the father who sacrificed his child could not hear the screams of the infant.

But there are two ways the fires of Molech are spoken of in scripture. One of which I have just written. The other was a kind of inauguration ritual to depict bravery in the face of adversity, and a means of purification by fire—much like walking on hot coals. In this ritual, two fires were lit in close proximity, and when a person walked between the fires, he was purified. The Lord prohibited both rituals because they smacked of human honor and ability to purify itself.

Honor and glory belong only to God. He alone is able to purify, and purification is only by the person and work of Christ (Lev. 18:21<sup>1</sup>). Verse 3 has to do with the latter description of “passing through the fire,” and perhaps even Hezekiah himself passed through these fires. However, it is highly probable that

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<sup>1</sup> **Lev. 18:21**, And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

Ahaz practiced the former form of sacrifice also, sacrificing some of his sons to a fiery doom in the hands of Moloch (2 Chron. 28:3<sup>1</sup>). The valley of Hinnom, also known as Tophet, is used in references to Hell and later became places where trash was burned (Isa. 30:33<sup>2</sup>). This reveals that Ahaz publicly and overtly practiced idolatry, even to the point of murder, to appease the strange gods, and his worship was hellish.

Verse 4 speaks to the zeal with which he approached his pantheon. This account is about *activity*, and Ahaz was a *busy* idolater, worshiping the calves of Jeroboam, sacrificing in the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree he could find (Jer. 2:2; 3:6<sup>3</sup>). He incorporated all manner of evil with the worship of the true and living God. Green trees played a big part in pagan worship. The Lord made mention of the practice throughout the scriptures (Jer. 10:3-4<sup>4</sup>).

Verses 5-8 report the account of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah and king of Israel, making war against Ahaz and Judah. All of this happened because of Ahaz's idolatry. Ahaz, according to the providence of God (2 Chron. 28:5<sup>5</sup>), took the riches of the house of the Lord and bought the aid of Tiglathpileser, king in Assyria. Tiglathpileser won the

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chron. 28:3**, Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> **Isa. 30:33**, For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

<sup>3</sup> **Jer. 2:2**; Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. **3:6**, The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

<sup>4</sup> **Jer. 10:3-4**, For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

<sup>5</sup> **2 Chron. 28:5**, Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

day and routed the king of Syria and the king of Israel.

When Ahaz went to Damascus to meet with Tiglathpileser, he saw an altar that made a real impression on him, and he sent Urijah the high priest to make one just like it, for his own use (v. 10). Verse 11 states that this was so important to Ahaz that he had to have it done by the time he returned to Jerusalem. Altars, especially pagan ones but also those which are claimed to originate in Christianity, are generally very impressive and central to worship. Even the evangelistic church altars are held in high esteem. When the two and one-half tribes (those who refused to enter the promised land) wanted to impress the others on the Canaan side of Jordan, they built an enormous altar that could be seen from a long distance.

Though altars do not exist today, men speak of family altars, church altars, and if you are really humble, you may even make an altar out of a stump, the epitome of idolatry (Isa. 44:14-20<sup>1</sup>). The *last* and *final* altar (The Lord Jesus) was on a hill called Golgotha, and there, His final sacrifice put away the sins of the elect. Any and all altars since are but pagan worship.

Ahaz loved his new plaything and immediately began to make offerings. He rearranged the furnishings in the temple, changing what God had ordered and put *his* altar in a place of *prominence* (vv. 12-18). God gave specific instruction concerning the brazen altar.

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 44:14-20**, He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Ex. 27:1-2

1, And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.

2, And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.

Urijah, the priest, was surely aware of these specifics. But before this blueprint was laid out, God had laid out another.

Ex. 20:24-26,

24, An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25, And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26, Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

There was to be no work of man and no ascendance of man. Ahaz was in direct disobedience in the erection of this altar, and it was nothing more than a showpiece for his own glory. Without altars, religion has nothing to brag about.

Finally, and most important, Ahaz's plea for Tiglathpileser to help was the revelation of his *unbelief*. He had been promised that the attack employed by Rezin and Pekah would come to nothing (Isa. 7:1-9<sup>1</sup>). Isaiah even told Ahaz to ask for a sign and

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 7:1-9**, And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; And say unto

the Lord would give it to prove that Judah would win the day (Isa. 7:10-11<sup>1</sup>). But Ahaz was an unbelieving pagan, and even used the ploy of fear of the Lord. He answered Isaiah saying, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD” (Isa. 7:12). Isaiah replied, “Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?” (Isa. 7:13). Isaiah's response reveals the truth about Ahaz. Ahaz's *unbelief* wearied the Lord.

The Lord Himself gave the sign, and what a sign it was! It was a sign that Ahaz would not live to see, but it would be the finishing of transgression, the end of sin, the making of reconciliation for iniquity, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the sealing up of prophecy, and the anointing of the Holy One. The sign will be the destruction of the pagan plethora of deities, the altars, and the rituals of useless religion.

With a single sign, the multiplicity of gods are set aside and with wondrous reduction of time, tide, and events, the sign is that God is coming to dwell among men. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

Let the kings, the false prophets, and the false teachers have their play pretties—God is coming (Isa. 8:8, 10; Matt. 1:20-23<sup>2</sup>).

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him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the LORD God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 7:10-11**, Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

<sup>2</sup> **Isa. 8:8**, And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

**10**, Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.

**Matt. 1:20-23**, But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord

And Ahaz dies (vv. 19-20).

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appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

# CAPTIVITY

## 2 Kings 17:1-41

1, In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

2, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3, Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

4, And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5, Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6, In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7, For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9, And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10, And they set them up images and groves in every high



hill, and under every green tree:

11, And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12, For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13, Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14, Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15, And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16, And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17, And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18, Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19, Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20, And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers,

until he had cast them out of his sight.

21, For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

22, For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

23, Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

24, And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

25, And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.

26, Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

27, Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28, Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

29, Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30, And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31, And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

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

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

34, Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, 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, Ye 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 ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

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

38, And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

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

40, Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

41, So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

**T**his chapter is a rehearsal of the idolatrous activity of the ten tribes of Israel that resulted in their captivity in Assyria by the providential hand of the Lord. This is a

remarkable account of the depravity of God's chosen, and it should always be considered that this depravity, idolatry, and rebellion is typical, a true picture and type of the carnal nature and innate rebellion of the kind of people that God has saved by His Sovereign Grace (1 Cor. 1:26-29<sup>1</sup>). Hoshea's reign was marked by new and perverse idolatry. He even sought the help of the king of *Egypt* against an attacking king. He, at least in his mind and according to his behavior, returned to Egypt, the land from which the Lord had delivered His people with a mighty hand through the blood of the Lamb (v. 7, 36). What a picture this is of the intractable inclination of our flesh to prefer slavery and bondage to the freedom of grace.

We could spend hours on the multiplicity of idolatries revealed in this passage and conclude that God was done with Israel and only saved Judah for David's sake, but this whole account is about the salvation of the elect (vv. 35-39). *True* Israel is the elect according to the election of grace, those loved by God from all eternity and those who will indeed be brought to serve the one true and living God. Their sojourn to that place of revealed grace, through the preaching of the gospel, will be fraught with all manner of evil doing, but at the appointed time they will be given faith to embrace the Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 4:28; Rom. 11:5-6, 26-27; Phil. 3:3<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Cor. 1:26-29**, For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom. 2:28-29**, For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

**9:6-8**, Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

**Gal. 4:28**, Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

**Rom. 11:5-6**, Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to

The prophets Isaiah and Hosea prophesied during this time, and their words shed a lot of light on the providential dealings of God as they relate to the salvation of the elect. Let us look at these two prophets as they lay out for us the wondrous grace of God shed upon the worst of humanity, the base elements of mankind who make up the objects of His unmerited favor.

The first thing we see is that this captivity was according to plan, according to divine purpose (Isa. 10:5-6; 42:24-25<sup>1</sup>). The fall of man into the slavery and captivity of sin, nor the wholesale depravity blindsided God. It was part of the purpose of grace, and we know this because Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Hosea shows forth a more full view of the salvation of the elect beginning with the depravity of Israel in the person of Gomer the harlot wife of Hosea. To read this book is to joy in the grace of God. Israel is also represented by Ephraim.

Her wickedness is seen throughout the prophesy:

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Hos. 4:17).

“I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled” (Hos. 5:3).

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the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

**26-27**, And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

**Phil. 3:3**, For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 10:5-6**, O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

**42:24-25**, Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

“And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face” (Hos. 7:2).

“Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hos. 7:8).

“Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria” (Hos. 7:11).

“Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us” (Hos. 10:1-8).

The result of that wickedness is clearly revealed.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change

their glory into shame” (Hos. 4:6-7).

The remedy is clearly declared.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God” (Hos. 2:14-23).

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days” (Hos. 3:4-5).

“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity,

and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:18-21).





# HEZEKIAH, GOD SLAYER

## 2 Kings 18:1-8

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

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.

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

4, He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

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 clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

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

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

**E**aston's Bible Dictionary reports that almost one thousand years had transpired from the time of the making of the brazen serpent to the time of its destruction during the reign of Hezekiah. The brazen serpent had become an object of worship. The people were burning

incense to it. In effect, they were worshipping and making petitions to it—seeking help from it. The brazen serpent had been, in the people's minds, promoted to the position of a god. It was not an exclusive god, but one of a pantheon of deities which the people of God had incorporated along with the worship of the true God.

Why did the people do such a horrid thing? The easy answer is that they were depraved, but there is more to understanding this idolatry than the doctrine of depravity. The people had five or six generations of stories about the serpent, and there is no doubt that what was a one-time act of God for the remedy of the people's sin and consequence of it, had become a powerful *fable* of mystical proportions to the people—a god. The longevity of a visible thing gives it value to people.

For a thousand years, this thing which had once been the cure for snake bites was still around and had become the stuff of legend. Parents, grandparents, and great grandparents had passed away, and this serpent was still there. Perhaps, in the mind of the people, it would last forever. Hezekiah checked any such notion, if indeed it existed. He took this serpent which once symbolized the substitutionary work of Christ and ground it to powder!

With wonderful command of language, Hezekiah gave the serpent a new name—"Nehushtan" (v. 4). He looked at the people and said of the object of worship, which he had just destroyed, that it was a "piece of brass"—nothing more, nothing less and nothing else. I am sure the reactions of the people were manifold.

Many felt that he had destroyed God. Others perhaps were less adamant and felt that he had destroyed a reminder of God, an aid in worship such as crosses, crucifixes, pictures, and steeples. Hezekiah made a profound statement concerning the worship of God, namely that there are no visible aids to the worship of God existent in this world. There is only the Word of God, and that is only received by faith—not by sight.

It is impossible, apart from a work of saving grace, to live in this world and put no eternal or spiritual value on everything you see. Conversely, it is impossible to believe anything you cannot see, apart from a work of saving grace. Remember also that under the Sinai covenant everything *was* visible, and though no sin was ever remitted under that system and all things in that system were but a shadow of good things to come, what those people knew of God and the worship that was to be made toward Him, resided exclusively in the realm of sight.

At the core of the idolatry that had become the practice of the people was the thing that makes a lost and natural man an idolater. This piece of brass once was the implement of deliverance from a natural malady brought on by the hatred of God's provision. To the natural mind, nature is as spiritual as it gets, and deliverance from the pains and afflictions of life is, to the natural man, salvation.

Any concept of God, whether true or false, has to do with salvation on some level. Natural man cannot transcend his nature and must have a deity that is visible to which he can turn in times of trouble. There is too much in the world that defies explanation and goes beyond human comprehension. Idolaters look to their god for salvation, and true worshipers look to their God for salvation.

Under the old covenant, the people of God, inundated with visible ceremonies and rituals, came to believe the elements used in worship could actually save them. An example of such can be found in 1 Samuel 4:2-3.

And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark

of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies” (1 Samuel 4:2-3).

The Ark (“it”) was their rock, “But their rock is not like our Rock” (Deut. 32:31)

The heart motive of idolatry is loving the *wrong* salvation. Religion, especially any religion that travels under the umbrella of Christendom, whether fundamentalist, evangelical, papal, reformed, legalistic or *any* of the myriad of denominational variations, is ultimately about *salvation*. Everyone wants to be saved from hell, from pain, from calamity and from trouble—everyone! Those who worship a false God do so to be saved—believing their god is able to save them, but “they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save” (Isa. 45:20). (Isa. 44:14-20; Dan. 6:20<sup>1</sup>.)

This belief and love of the *wrong* salvation can be of varying consecration and depth. In the final analysis, the variation is the degree to which man sees himself as co-contributor in his own salvation and the implementer and procurer of it. The concept of free will is declared in many ways, but all end up glorifying

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 44:14-20**, He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

**Dan. 6:20**, And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

man in his own salvation. The degree involves the extent to which their god participated in their salvation or the extent of their cooperation with their god in their salvation. The thing to realize is that all practitioners of religion do so *for* salvation. People love salvation.

The destruction of the brazen serpent was a defining statement discerning between those who love salvation and those who love *God's salvation*. The one is true, vital, and eternal; the other is *just brass*.

The Lord distinguishes between true salvation and that one attributed to idols with the use of the personal possessive pronoun “thy.” King David wrote: “I will rejoice in *thy* salvation” (Psalms 9:14). “But I have trusted in *thy* mercy; my heart shall rejoice in *thy* salvation” (Psa. 13:5). (Psa. 21:5; 40:10; 85:7; 119:41; Luke2:30<sup>1</sup>.)

Those who are yet in nature, lost and without faith, yet love salvation. Because they do not know God, which is eternal life, they must of necessity participate in their own salvation. Their idolatry begins with rejecting God as He is revealed in nature (Rom. 1:18-23<sup>2</sup>) and culminates in their rejection of the gospel, which is the report and person of God's salvation (Rom. 1:16-

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<sup>1</sup> **Psa. 21:5**, His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

**40:10**, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

**85:7**, Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

**119:41**, Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

**Luke2:30**, For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom. 1:18-23**, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

17<sup>1</sup>). The longevity of their system of belief (begun in the garden) gives them assurance that it will last. Those that lived in the time of Hezekiah and worshiped the serpent were practicing what was to them “that old-time religion.” Over a period of a thousand years the brazen serpent had become a powerful symbol of salvation even though it was nothing but a piece of shiny, polished metal.

These adherents could say with pride that their religion was good enough for mom and pop, so it was good enough for them. They could point to their god and say, “*It will save us.*” Their religion was *real, visible, and tangible* and was the source of many a saved life. None of this could be questioned, though none of it was of any eternal value (Matt. 7:21-23<sup>2</sup>). The brazen serpent was not a god at the time of its manufacture. It did not even represent Christ personally in its use but was exclusively representative of the *work* that He performed and the reason for it. The serpent pictured the penalty for our sin. It was a picture of Christ being made sin. Somewhere along the way, some group decided that *it* was a god, worthy of worship and possessed of power to answer prayer.

These, by affirmative vote, personal decision, and by suspending rational thought, made this piece of brass to be a god. The salvation which the serpent offered was an invention of a people bent on religion and willing to give some credit to the object they had turned into a deity. They were, as with all idolaters, worshipping their own power, but for religious reasons of will worship and vain humility, called their own depraved ingenuity a god. Since this was no god at all, the

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<sup>1</sup> **Rom. 1:16-17**, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

<sup>2</sup> **Matt. 7:21-23**, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

incense they offered was to their own imagination. This is idolatry, loving salvation but not *God's* salvation.

“Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified” (Psalm 40:16). “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:1-3).

Those that love *God's* salvation do not honor a brass invention, they magnify God. Those who magnify man or an object, on any level, do not love God's salvation. Those who love God's salvation magnify Him because He is the *author* and *finisher* of it. They magnify Him because the salvation that belongs to Him did not look to them in the least degree for its accomplishment. They love God's salvation because it is about God and not about them (Ps. 115:1<sup>1</sup>). They love God's salvation because it honors all of God's attributes and answers all His requirements—justice, law, righteousness, mercy, grace, longsuffering (Rom. 3:24-26<sup>2</sup>). They love God's salvation because it glorifies the Son of God in both His humanity and His deity. They love God's salvation because it magnifies God and not man, and they are glad and willing to say so.

Idolaters cannot give full glory to their idols because they, by cleverness and depraved ingenuity, have invented their gods to the exact specification of their needs. Believers give glory to where glory is due. True worship is worship of the true God. False worship is nothing but Nehushtan—a piece of brass! True

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<sup>1</sup> **Ps. 115:1**, Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom. 3:24-26**, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.



salvation magnifies God; false salvation magnifies objects and symbols and those who make them.

“He [Hezekiah] removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan” (v. 4).

# HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB (1)

## 2 Kings 18:13-36

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.

14, And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

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.

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 Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

19, And Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

20, Thou sayest, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

21, Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

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

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

24, How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

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, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy 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 unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

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

29, Thus saith 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 the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

31, Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the

waters of his cistern:

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 ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

33, Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

34, Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

35, Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

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

**T**his portion of scripture begins the account of a war of words between kings and a war of slaughter wrought by one angel against an entire army. It results with that army going home with its tail between its legs and the consequent death of their boastful king. The victory of Judah was accomplished through prayer without one sword ever being drawn.

In the previous study we looked at the zeal of Hezekiah in the utter destruction of all remnants of idolatry in Judah. He also ceased to pay tribute to the king of Assyria, which his wicked father had paid to keep Assyria appeased. It was this action that resulted in Assyria's attack against Judah and the resultant error of Hezekiah.

The Lord said of Hezekiah, "After him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that was before him" (2 Kings 18:5). This statement necessitates some qualification. First this was not only said of Hezekiah, but also of Josiah (2

Kings 23:25<sup>1</sup>). Secondly, the statement is qualified as to specifics. Hezekiah was not greater than David or Solomon, but he was unique in that he did not commit adultery or murder as did David, and he did not embrace idolatry as did Solomon. This is the meaning of the accolade laid upon Hezekiah by the Lord.

As is always the case, whether clearly stated or not, there is always a “but” after the praise given when it involves humanity, even the best of humanity. The best of men are but men at best, and being men, life will prove them to be the carnal mess they are. Such was the case with Hezekiah in his primary dealings with Sennacherib. 2 Kings 18:9-12<sup>2</sup> are a kind of parentheses about Shalmaneser’s war against Hoshea, king of Israel, and are mentioned to establish a timeline concerning the overlap of the two respective reigns. Verse 13 follows verse 8 in chronology, and most of this chapter involves the monologue of Sennacherib as he berates Hezekiah, Judah, and the one true God. We will look at that shortly, but first, let us consider the words of Hezekiah in response to the initial threat of Sennacherib (vv. 13-15).

As we look at Hezekiah's response, we must view it in the light verses 18:5-7<sup>3</sup>. God's estimation of Hezekiah does *not* change as Hezekiah trembles before Sennacherib. This is always

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Kings 23:25**, And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

<sup>2</sup> **2 Kings 18:9-12**, 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 king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

<sup>3</sup> **18:5-7**, 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. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

the case with the *elect*. God knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust, and the multitude of our failings does not change His loving relationship with us. Even in this episode, if asked, God would still say of Hezekiah what he said in verse 5b. “After him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” But that does not say there was a *relationship* change. For this brief episode, Hezekiah's unbelief came to the fore, and he trusted in the arm of the flesh.

When faced with a trial that seems impossible, human nature falters and begins to seek by its own power and initiative to remedy the situation. Would to God that we might immediately fall on grace and sue for mercy, but the truth is that for most, if not all of us, God is our last resort. But praise His name, in all our departures from Him, He never leaves or forsakes us though He does suffer us to be ourselves until we have exhausted that shallow, impotent pool.

Upon seeing the onslaught from Sennacherib, Hezekiah begins to melt. He had trusted in the Lord, done great things, and the Lord had prospered Him. But what he does in light of *this* threat, to some, seems out of character for one who “trusts the Lord.” Paul told Timothy to “not judge a thing before its time.” The Lord is still at the helm of this ship, and the rudder of divine providence will bring it to safe harbor. But for now, Hezekiah stands as a reminder and a warning that our flesh is always at the ready to *detour* our course from Christ. Hezekiah's words and actions reveal that for the moment something other than faith was in play.

Observe several things:

First, rather than seeking help at the house of God, he kowtows to Sennacherib and apologizes for offending him. He is apologizing for not keeping up the payment, the bribe, the protection money that his father had paid for years. It is important to note that this was not Hezekiah's first response.

According to 2 Chron. 32:1-8<sup>1</sup>, Hezekiah made ready for war at first but relented when his major fortresses fell.

Secondly, Hezekiah sues for mercy at the door of Sennacherib. "I have offended, return from me." This is no small thing. Hezekiah, in effect, is attributing sovereignty to Sennacherib as is the case for all that seek mercy.

Thirdly, Hezekiah mocks the concept of mercy by vowing to pay for it; "That which thou puttest on me will I bear" (v. 14). If you can buy mercy, the one to whom you are indebted can change the game. Sennacherib did!

After Hezekiah raids the temple coffers and strips the gold from the temple columns, he delivers some 247,500 pounds of precious metal into the hands of Sennacherib. He was paying for Sennacherib to forego any further siege against Judah, but making a deal with the devil means that you will have the devil to pay. Sennacherib keeps the money and reneges on the deal.

What follows are the words of a man who knows he has Hezekiah over a barrel. His conversation, delivered by his emissaries, is a mockery of Judah and Hezekiah's efforts in the flesh while claiming to trust the Lord. How easy we make it for our enemies when our walk does not align with or testimony.

First, the emissary sent from Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, mocks Hezekiah for the compact he had with Egypt (v. 21).

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chron. 32:1-8**, After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

This compact was made by Hezekiah's father, but evidently, Egypt still had boots on the ground in Judah. Rabshakeh mocks Hezekiah for trusting in an army that cannot stand against his master, Sennacherib (vv. 19-24).

Secondly, Rabshakeh tells Hezekiah that it is Sennacherib who is serving and trusting the Lord, not Hezekiah. Rabshakeh said that this onslaught against Judah was commanded by the Lord (v. 25).

Thirdly, Rabshakeh switches from addressing Hezekiah and begins to address the people who have manned the wall for the battle. To add insult to injury, Rabshakeh speaks to those on the wall in the Jewish language rather than in the Syrian language, and when asked to desist, he refused (v. 26).

Fourthly, Rabshakeh tells the people, in the Jewish language, not to trust Hezekiah—that their God will not deliver them. Their choice is to eat and drink their own waste in defeat or offer a gift to Sennacherib and be delivered to a land flowing with milk and honey (vv. 27-32).

Fifthly, Rabshakeh reminds the warriors on the wall that God has not delivered the cities of Judah that have already fallen at the hand of Sennacherib (vv. 33-35).

Thanks be unto God, the warriors on the wall obey Hezekiah and not the threats of Sennacherib (v. 36). The emissaries of Hezekiah came to him having rent their clothes in a symbolic gesture of sorrow, grief, and indignation, and reported the words of Sennacherib to Hezekiah.

We will continue the story here in the next study, but thus far, what can we learn from this?

First, we can truly account that as far as what can be seen, the enemies of the gospel can put forth reasonable and logical argument for why they should be heard and followed. There will be no *spiritual* arguments but rather reasons based on what is *seen*. They have superior numbers, and they have won many a battle. They use the threat of punishment and the promise of reward—if they are given your allegiance. They use their size



and conquests to say that they are the ones actually serving the Lord. “If it ain't growin', it ain't New Testament...” “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matt. 7:22)

Secondly, they are great watchers of *behavior* who wait for the believer to deny God by applying to the flesh. The best response is to answer them not a word because whatever weakness they point out in us does not tell half the story. Self-defense is self-righteousness. Trust in the Lord—He that is in your midst is mighty to save, and he *will* save.

“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD *thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save*, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:14-17).

## HEZEKIAH'S AND SENNACHERIB (2)

### 2 Kings 19

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.

3, And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

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

5, So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

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

7, Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, 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 thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

10, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying,

Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

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

12, Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezep, 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?

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.

15, And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

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

17, Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

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 thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

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

21, This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22, Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and

against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

23, By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

24, I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

25, Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.

26, Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

27, But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

28, Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29, And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30, And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31, For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

32, Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an

arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

33, By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

34, For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

35, And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

36, So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37, And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

**T**his chapter contains an account of King Hezekiah's response to hearing of the blasphemy of Sennacherib, and it is exactly stated again in Isaiah 37. We saw in the last study that Hezekiah's immediate response to Sennacherib's warring was to resort to the flesh, and the result was that Sennacherib took every city he attacked. The only city left to sack was Jerusalem.

Humanly speaking, Sennacherib could not be stopped. With the arrogance that often attends victory, Sennacherib's threat and promise was wholesale slaughter even to the point of destroying Hezekiah's God, just as he had destroyed the false gods of every city that had stood in his path. Being an unbelieving infidel, Sennacherib mocked the true God, and did so with what he thought was impunity. Since he believed that Hezekiah's God was just another god of wood, metal, or imagination, he feared no reprisal for his words (Eccl. 8:11-

13<sup>1</sup>).

But as God's thoughts are not the thoughts of man, He does not always call in his debts when men think they are due. Shimei surely thought that cursing David would cost him nothing because David had not immediately had him killed. Years later, when Shimei was at ease, the sword of justice fell on his head, and the price of cursing the king was his own death at the hands of David's son, Solomon. Sennacherib stands on a slippery slope, his feet will soon slide, and he will careen headlong into the pit of the damned.

However, as this chapter opens, Sennacherib sits proud and assured that this Hezekiah is but another small skirmish in his mighty campaign. While he anticipates his own glory, Hezekiah sends his emissaries to Isaiah beseeching the prophet to pray to God for him and the people.

We get our first view of the salvation of the elect in the last phrase of verse 4. The prayer is to be made for the “remnant that is left” (4d). “Remnant” is one of the words that so well identifies the *elect* throughout the word of God. (vv. 30-31)

Here are but a few of them.

“Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small *remnant*, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:9).

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the *remnant* of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth” (Isa. 10:20).

“For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea,

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<sup>1</sup> **Eccl. 8:11-13**, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

yet a *remnant* of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness” (Isa. 10:22).

“Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a *remnant* shall be saved” (Rom. 9:27).

“Even so then at this present time also there is a *remnant* according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5).

These all clearly declare the truth that God has an *elect* people. The fact they are called a remnant assures the elect that they are, to the rest of the world, but a scrap of humanity—a very small scrap. The Lord said in His prayer concerning this remnant, “I pray not for the world, I pray for them that thou hast given me” (John 17:9).

Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah that The Lord had answered their prayer and that Sennacherib would soon meet his end in his own land (vv. 5-7). In verse 7, Isaiah said that the Lord would send a rumor, and we see the result of that rumor providentially played out in the next verses.

The rumor was that the king of Ethiopia had aligned with Hezekiah, so Sennacherib went to battle with him, and thus there was a stay in the execution of his plans against Judah. The wheels of providence turned to finish the course of Sennacherib's existence. Sennacherib again sent the same message by letter to Hezekiah in retaliation for this presumed alliance with Ethiopia (vv. 10-13).

Hezekiah's response was to seek the Lord personally for help (v. 14). Hezekiah took the letter, laid it before the Lord and prayed the Lord to show Himself in such a way that there would be no question that He, alone, was the one true God. He also declares that Sennacherib's boasting about destroying the pagan gods are of little consequence because they were the works of men's hands (vv. 14-19).

Hezekiah's prayer is that God would glorify His great

name. This ought to be the context of every prayer to God (Josh. 7:8-9; 1 Kings 18:36-37<sup>1</sup>). What Hezekiah did is a wonderful example of dealing with the enemy. Over the years I have received phone calls and messages calling me a false prophet, accusing me a deserting the gospel, and all manner of evil. On occasion I have retaliated, and in every case that has proven a grievous error. Thank God that most of the time I have been made to remember Hezekiah and laid it before the Lord. What happened after, I know not, but cares that are cast upon the Lord are His and not to be retrieved into our own hands. This I know, the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and I have seen that my efforts in the flesh are vain things. We are no match for the enemy. We are chaff to his sickle, but our God cannot be matched; none can stand before his wrath. As Hezekiah prayed for the remnant and for the glory of God, so our Lord, the perfect intercessor, prayed the same (John 17:9-17<sup>2</sup>).

Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah that the Lord had heard and answered his prayer, and the answer is full of glory and assurance (v. 20-34). In the Lords answer we find that He gives

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<sup>1</sup> **Josh. 7:8-9**, O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

<sup>1</sup> **Kings 18:36-37**, And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

<sup>2</sup> **John 17:9-17**, I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.



assurance that none of Sennacherib's actions were by accident, and they did not occur outside the will of the Lord. God will have His people call upon Him and uses whatever means that please Him to bring them to the throne of grace. Sennacherib was a pawn; he was God's performing primate and would do God's bidding. He is then cast among the broken potsherds with all the vessels fitted for destruction. Sennacherib was the *tool* that was used to pry Hezekiah from his efforts of the flesh.

Without a shot being fired by either side, the siege was ended by the power of God. He sent an angel, *one* angel, perhaps the Angel of the covenant, and that night while Sennacherib's mighty army slept, 185,000 of that irresistible force were slain (v. 35). When Sennacherib awoke, he saw nothing but carcasses with not one to call to muster. He went home utterly defeated to be run through by the sword of the sons of his own loins while he worshipped his feckless, handmade deity of an eagle with a man's head (v. 37).

How the mighty are fallen!

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. 9:17-23).

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” (Isa. 45:5-9).



# FAITH AND NATURE

## 2 Kings 20

1, In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2, Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,

3, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4, And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

5, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

6, And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

7, And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

8, And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?

9, And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

10, And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

11, And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

12, At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

13, And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

14, Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon.

15, And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

16, And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD.

17, Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

18, And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

19, Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?

20, And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the

chronicles of the kings of Judah?

21, And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

**I**n this chapter, we are once again confronted with the truth that the best of men are but men, and though they be rightly held in high esteem, that beast within, the carnal nature is always contrary to the spirit, so that man cannot do what he would, whether good or evil.

Paul summarized it best when he said, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25). Paul was not excusing his sin, nor was he stating that it did not matter. He sincerely grieved his carnality and cried, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (Rom. 7:24)? The believer does not equate his liberty, bought by Christ, with license to sin because he just cannot help himself. Rather he admits and confesses his inability to do anything about his estate and applies to the only hope there is, the perfect sacrifice of Jesus.

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 7:22-8:4).

Every believer knows that even as he seeks to be obedient to his Lord, his carnal nature waits patiently to insert itself into the picture, and even though he knows this, his nature most often convinces him that all is well.

This chapter in 2 Kings begins with the words “in those days.” These were the salad days for Hezekiah and for Judah. Sennacherib was dead. The Angel of the Lord had destroyed his army. There was no threat on the horizon. Hezekiah knew the Lord had delivered him and Judah, and as is usually the case, the most dangerous time for a believer is when he feels a kind of invincibility, having experienced the power and favor of God. Though such a situation should bring us to a state of thanksgiving, praise, and prayers offered to the Lord to keep us from presumption, generally and sadly, our carnal nature invigorates our confidence in ourselves. The wisest of all men said, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:8-9).

Though the reason for this sickness is not clearly stated, the fact that Hezekiah was stricken with a lethal malady, a sickness unto death, did not occur without cause. We know that affliction for the people of God has a singular purpose, and that is to bring us to the feet of our Sovereign. This is precisely the result obtained when Hezekiah received the news of his impending death (vv. 1-3).

In order to avoid theologically motivated dotting questions, what comes to pass after Hezekiah's soulful plea for his life must be viewed as all things must—in light of the result—because that is the only way that a believer can discern providential purpose. Knowing that God is sovereign and does not give account of his matters, we can look at the result and know *that* is how it was meant to be. Spurgeon said,

“Sometimes the only reason I can give for anything is that it turned out alright.” Men may busy themselves with the shadow of the Sun being moved backwards 10 degrees as a sign to Hezekiah, or that he was given an additional 15 years. The result remains that his days were *always determined*, his months were with God, and *that*, he could not pass.

He that set the course of what we call natural laws, simply by the word of his mouth, can easily suspend those laws controlled by him to suit His purpose. This is evidenced by every miracle in the word of God. Such things can be carnal misdirects to cause us to look away from the *result*, which is the *true* answer. The sickness, the cure, and the sign resulted in Hezekiah calling on God, realizing that past victories were just that, past victories, and the believer needs new mercies every day. Divine providence had done its work, as it always does, reminding that the intricacies of God's doings are not for us to know. Ours is to bow to His wisdom and see that the result is for our good and His glory.

In Hezekiah's plea, he beseeches the Lord for mercy based on his obedience to the Lord (v. 3). Though we may think this is presumptuous and prideful, the Lord had given that same account of Hezekiah and his reign. However, it is always a bit uncomfortable to hear any believer approach the Lord based on personal merit because we all know that such an approach will not stand the test of perfection. Most of the times when the people approach the Lord, it is based on covenant mercies because it is the *Lord's* faithfulness that is our hope, not *our* faithfulness. And this is precisely proven in the reason our Lord gives for answering Hezekiah's prayer (vv. 4-6; 2 Kings 19:34<sup>1</sup>).

Hezekiah is on a high plane again. He has been miraculously healed. He has been given what he believes to be a fifteen-year reprieve from a death sentence. God has moved the Sun backward to give him a sign of proof. Things could not be

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Kings 19:34**, For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.



better. His life should now be a constant state of praise and thanksgiving. But being in this state of bliss and confidence, the old man is invigorated to cause the believer to take for granted that which is only due to the unmerited favor of God. Our carnality is insidiously clever, taking a situation that should clearly cause confidence in Christ and turning us to consider that our good fortune is due to some good thing that we have done. Sadly, though often repeated, we never seem to suspect and never seem to learn.

So it was, as Hezekiah basked in his good situation, he received a get-well card from the son of the king of Babylon whose name meant “worshipper of Baal.” Hezekiah invited him over to the house and showed him all his treasures, *all* of them (vv. 12-13). This act reeks of pride!

Hezekiah was impressed that such would come from so far away just to see him, and he thought to impress them (14c). Did Hezekiah say to these worshippers of Baal (Nimrod deified) that the Lord had made him king, increased his dominion, and given all these things into his hand? Probably not. But what he did would bring captivity to Israel in the very place from which these Baal worshippers came.

Babylon will be the warden of imprisoned and captive Israel for many years. But just as purposeful providence brought Israel to Egypt to be delivered, so it is that Israel will go in captivity to Babylon to be delivered by the mighty arm of God, as He employs another pagan to cause their deliverance. Hezekiah's progeny will lose all the goods he has boastfully displayed to the Babylonians and even their future as possible fathers (v. 18). They will arrive at their place of captivity with nothing but the one thing that is everything, the covenant—the sure mercies of David.

The response of Hezekiah is found in verse 19. These words are *not* some faithful resignation to the will of God as with Eli, but a sigh of relief that the calamities ordained would not come in his day. “Well, that's bad but at least I won't have to see it.”

Thus, the end of Hezekiah's reign comes to pass, and Hezekiah is buried with honors.

“And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead” (2 Chron. 32:33).

And the Lord's estimation of him was that “he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, *even* as his father David.”  
Thank God for His *grace*!



## SIN AND GRACE

### 2 Kings 21:1-18

2 Kings 21:1-18;

1, Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah.

2, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

3, For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4, And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.

5, And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6, And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7, And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8, Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

9, But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them

to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

10, And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

11, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:

12, Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

13, And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

14, And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;

15, Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

16, Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

17, Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

18, And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

**T**he twenty nine year reign of Hezekiah has come to an end and the great king has been buried with honors. His epitaph is written in the word of God. He did that which was right in the eyes of God. He had reestablished true worship in Judah and had rid Jerusalem of very idol, destroyed

every grove, and had torn down the high places. It is important to remember that the worship ordained by God was ceremony and ritual under that Old Covenant. Under the auspices of that covenant the act and not the heart was required.

This does not mean that the heart was not considered. The law required love toward God and love toward neighbor, but the law served to reveal that all were guilty (Rom. 3:19<sup>1</sup>). The typical remedy was the ceremony which involved various offerings and daily rituals, each designed to point to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. By following the act involved in the rituals, the requirements of the covenant were met, and being a conditional covenant, the blessing promised upon obedience ensued. Faith and love were not required in the accomplishment of the ritual, only adherence to its requirements.

Even if obedience was offered, no sin was ever put away or remitted. The ritualistic law and worship were designed to reveal sin and the need for atonement. Being a matter of physical obedience, reaching to the heart was not required. This being the case, it is no wonder that Israel and Judah readily slipped back into idolatry because they could act according to the precepts of any religion and account that their obedience was sufficient to please whichever god they were worshipping.

Thank God that this covenant was fulfilled and set aside by our Savior, or we yet today would be ready to worship any deity that gained prominence and fit our own measure of which god met our particular needs. Thank God that He did not leave us to ourselves but wrought out our salvation without any consideration to our obedience. It is also no small wonder that those religions or denominations that dangle their toes in the law and ceremony of the Old Covenant find it easy, and even commendable, to accept any new notion that plays to their

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<sup>1</sup> **Rom. 3:19**, Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

concept of obedience. Faith and love are the hallmark of true belief, and both are provided to the elect so that obedience is a result of salvation rather than a deciding factor.

With the death of Hezekiah, the crowning of Manasseh, and his subsequent foray into every manner of idolatry, it should come as no surprise that change of gods and ritual was easily adapted to and accomplished. The list of Manasseh's crimes is no small thing—He was a wholesale idolater! It seems there were no depths to which he would not descend. *Everything* that Hezekiah *destroyed* for the glory of God, Manasseh *re-instituted* and much more to boot. It appears that he sought to out-do every idolater before him. He even built altars in the temple of God for the worship of the heavenly bodies, especially Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, and the Sun and Moon (where God had put His name).

This planetary pantheon had been worshipped as gods since Nimrod was declared Baal, the Sun god. Manasseh was also big on spiritualism and the occult, employing enchanters, familiar spirits, wizards, and made his sons to pass through the fires of Molech. He observed times, which was the astrological alignment of the stars that offered omens and predictions. He was sold out to every false god and false teaching that was available to him, and he proved zealous in his pursuits. And Judah, after 29 years of true worship, slid easily into these vile practices, and those who had only done lip service to God during the time of Hezekiah jumped at the opportunity to turn this young king, just entering puberty and highly susceptible to suggestion, into the veritable monarch of all things abominable. Manasseh was also a prolific killer, shedding, according to God's Word, "innocent blood, very much" (v. 16).

The anger of God was kindled against Manasseh and idolatrous Judah (vv. 1-15). Though His words are harsh and the punishment severe, the words from God yet contain true elements of mercy. Of Jerusalem, the Lord says that He will wipe them as a plate and turn them "upside down" (v. 13). This

suggests that the Lord will send them into captivity and essentially turn their world upside down. Also, with the mention of the remnant and forsaking them, we know this forsaking is *temporary* because God had *promised* not to forsake Judah for David's sake. The remnant will go into captivity but will be delivered by God's mighty arm. As we come to the end of Manasseh's reign, we would be hard pressed to find anything about him in his 55-year reign that would suggest that he was anything other than reported here in this passage. This passage is but a record of sin and more sin.

But remember the words of Paul in Romans 5:20; "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." For those who justify their sin, these words are a license to delve into the depths of their depravity. For those who see and feel the sinfulness of their sin, these words are a balm in Gilead.

2 Chron. 33:11-19;

11, Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12, And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

14, Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

15, And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.



16, And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

17, Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.

18, Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

19, His prayer also, and how God was intreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.

How beautiful is the providence of God. If He suffers His children to be made captive and overtaken, it is for the purpose of bringing them to repentance and faith. Manasseh is taken among the thorns, bound in fetters, and carried away. What an example this is of our inability to overcome our enemies. Men are taken captive by Satan at his own will. How sore was this affliction, but all was according to purpose. In verse 12 we see that, “When *he* was in *affliction*, he besought the LORD, *his God*.” Manasseh took up headquarters in the dust, humbled himself greatly before “the God of his Fathers.” Baal, Ashtaroath, the Moon, Sun, and stars are nowhere in all his thoughts. They all are gods of good times and fleshly pleasures. Now is the time of troubled souls, and none but the God of his Fathers will do. God heard him and delivered him out of his troubles and restored him to his kingdom. The result of this deliverance is seen in verses 14-16. And the history of it all is summed up above in verses 18-19 (Ps. 34:6, 17<sup>1</sup>).

Praise His Name that our sin cannot prevent His grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 34:6, This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

17, The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.



# THE BOOK

## 2 Kings 22:1-13

1, Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath.

2, And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

3, And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying,

4, Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people:

5, And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house,

6, Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house.

7, Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

8, And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

9, And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered

it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD.

10, And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11, And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12, And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13, Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

**W**e have arrived at the record of one of the greatest kings in all of Israel. The account of Josiah and his reign is the wonderful record of a young king with a tender heart (2 Kings 22:19<sup>1</sup>). He was an eight-year-old boy when he began his reign, his father Amon having been murdered after a two-year reign. Amon had followed in the steps of his father Manasseh in doing evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 21:19-20<sup>2</sup>). However, He did not repent as Manasseh did, and he died in infamy. This is the heritage of the young lad that takes the reins of Judah. Josiah's reign was 31 years. At the age of 39, he was taken from this world, and he was taken by promise of mercy. His mother was Jedidah, which

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Kings 22:19**, Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> **2 Kings 21:19-20**, Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did.

means “beloved.” She was the daughter of Adaiah, which means “Jehovah has adorned Himself.” Josiah's name means, “whom Jehovah heals.”

The inspired canon records that Josiah did what was “right in the sight in the Lord.” He walked in the way of David and turned not aside to the right hand or the left. He was a single-minded young man (Luke 11:34<sup>1</sup>). Not much is known about the time between the first and the eighteenth year of his reign. We do know that one of the prophets that served during his reign was Jeremiah, who prophesied during the captivity that followed fast on the heels of Josiah's death. Jeremiah might well have been referring to Josiah when he said; “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lam. 3:27). We also have a record of the eighth year of his reign (16 years old) and the twelfth year of his reign (20 years old) in 2 Chronicles.

2 Chron. 34:3-7,

3, For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4, And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5, And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

6, And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.

7, And when he had broken down the altars and the

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<sup>1</sup> **Luke 11:34**, The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

He was zealous for the glory of the Lord and showed utter and complete disdain for any god and any worship, save for the worship of the one true God.

We will see, in studies to come, the glory of the young king's reign and the character of the man. We know from what we have just read in the Chronicles that he was singular in his thoughts toward God. He took the riches of the temple and hired workers and artificers to restore the temple to its former glory, and while that was taking place, Hilkiyah the high priest found the book of the law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and gave it to Shaphan the scribe, and he read it. Now, this account is matter of fact, but it is the underlying suggestions that I want us now to consider.

The first thing to consider is that this book was "found". This suggests that it was stumbled upon by accident. Perhaps in the renovations, this old dust-covered tome was happed upon, but we know that happenstance and chance are only words invented by men to identify that which is outside their control. However, everything is under the control of the absolute sovereign (Eccl. 9:11<sup>1</sup>).

This was the word of God, the books that Moses had penned, the Book of the Law, instructions in righteousness, and the instructions and commandments concerning life in the Promise Land. The kings, both good and bad, had come and gone. Some had sought the Lord for help while with others there was no thought of God at all. All the while, this Book was gathering dust.

While prophets entered here and there when specific needs occurred, besought the Lord for help, and received mercy

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<sup>1</sup> **Eccl. 9:11**, I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

aplenty, this Book lay in some cupboard untouched until Hilkiah found it. It was unread and unused for only the Lord knows how long. In the presence of this vital edict from God, stone gods were erected, altars of strange fire were lit, children were made to go through the fires of Molech, and Baal stood in the House of God—all while His Word, His Book lay forgotten and unheeded; “I have found the book of the Law.”

It would seem that a high priest whose duties and wardrobe were so minutely quantified in the book would have spent much time in “the book,” but evidently such was not the case. It gives pause to the believer to wonder if the worship, even under men like Hezekiah, was according to the precepts ascribed in the Word and leaves no doubt as to why all sorts of idolatry was present in the land (Prov. 29:18<sup>1</sup>).

The second thing to be considered is that the Book was handed to Shaphan. The interesting thing is this little phrase, “and he read it.” This man's *job* was to make copies of the scripture. Every king was to have his *own* copy (Deut. 17:18-20<sup>2</sup>). Not only was it to be studied, but it was also to be read publicly every seven years to all the people, which would of necessity require many copies to be written (Deut. 31:10-13<sup>3</sup>). This would keep the scribes busy. But here at the end of *many* seven-year periods we have an understated fact. Shaphan, when

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<sup>1</sup> **Prov. 29:18**, Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

<sup>2</sup> **Deut. 17:18-20**, And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> **Deut. 31:10-13**, And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

he was handed the book, read it; “and he read it.” This suggests that he had not read it, much less copied it often.

This is supported by how he described this most sacred volume when he advised the king of what Hilkiyah had found (v. 10...“a book”). Two things are of paramount importance is this description.

First, without the employment of the definite article “the” (THE BOOK), this book is put in a category with other books.

Secondly, after he read this book, Shaphan calls it “a” book, which indicates that this might have been the *only* copy. Save for the discovery of this book, the Bible would have perhaps begun with the book of Joshua and no such words could have been uttered by Philip to Nathaniel in John 1:45, “We have found *him*, of whom *Moses in the law*, and the prophets, *did write*, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

From Genesis through Deuteronomy there are so many things, types, pictures, and shadows of our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of the law. The book is all about *Him* (the new creation, Joseph, Abel's lamb, the Passover lamb, the high priest, the offerings, the feasts and the sabbaths). Perhaps Hilkiyah's discovery is why you have that blessed book that you hold in your lap.

Then we see a distinction. I do not discount that there was some excitement when Hilkiyah and Shaphan found the book, but the way they handled it seems to suggest that religion had long since numbed their minds and deadened their hearts. When they read the book they treated it somewhat like a *thing of interest*, but neither of them had much of a recorded reaction. They did not rend their clothes. Shaphan gave it second place in his report to the king (vv. 9-10).

But *immediately* upon hearing it, Josiah's tender heart was broken because he heard of the end of Israel. This book and its effect on this king would change Judah like no other.

Do not leave this book to gather dust.



“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to *thy word*” (Ps. 119:9).

“*Thy word* have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11).

“Make me to understand the way of thy *precepts*: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works” (Ps. 119:27).

“*Thy word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

“The entrance of *thy words* giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Ps. 119:130).

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word* of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is *the word* which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

“For *the word* of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12-13).



# WRATH AND MERCY

## 2 Kings 22:11-20

11, And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12, And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13, Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

14, So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15, And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

17, Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

18, But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

19, Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

20, Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

**J**osiah, having heard the words of the law read, rent his clothes. This was to express his embarrassment and guilt for how low Israel had come and fear of the sure wrath and judgment of God that must come upon Judah for their gross idolatry and forsaking God. The words read were from Leviticus 26:14-45 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Please read those declarations of coming wrath.

Here for information's sake I quote Lev. 26:14-18;

14, But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;

15, And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:

16, I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

17, And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.

18, And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

If you read the remainder of the verses in Leviticus and those in

Deuteronomy, you will understand why Josiah saw nothing but impending doom for himself and his people.

Though the king understood the words of the book, he only knew that judgment was coming. He did not have a time or schedule as the Lord had not stated *when* He would bring this down upon Judah. He knew that long before he assumed the throne that all but a few of the kings that preceded him were guilty of the abominations that attend idolatry and rebellion against God. He also knew that he did not have a personal copy of the Book, as God had commanded every king in His Word. From the first day of his reign, though ignorant of this command, he had not had the book, studied the book, or been instructed in the book, and even sins of omissions are still sins. It is evident that he had a repentant heart and that he was a true believer accepting the righteous judgment that was due himself and his nation (Ps. 51:4<sup>1</sup>). Probably to find out how close he and the people were to the impending judgment, he inquires of the Lord (v. 13). He does so, not to turn the Lord, but to seek His face, as it were, to confess his sin and justify the Lord in what He has promised to do. His inquiry is to tell the Lord that he understands that punishment and judgment are right and deserved.

The party that had brought him the Book consulted with Huldah the prophetess. She, like Deborah, Miriam before her, and Anna after her, held the office of prophetess. Though rare as to gender, these women were instruments of the Lord, and the Lord spoke through them.

Huldah was a matter-of-fact woman and did not dilly-dally with the truth. She spoke what God told her, and it is evident that she was not even amenable to the common courtesies that attend giving a message to a king. Generally, we find the prophets of God paying obeisance to royalty, addressing them or speaking of them using “my lord the king.” Notice how she

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 51:4, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

speaks of the king in verse 15. There is no doubt that she *knew* who was inquiring of the Lord, but she refers to him as “the man that sent you to me.” This may be viewed as disrespect, but I think it simply reveals that who she spoke for was the *King of Kings*. The truth is to go forth without regard to rank, position or anything that might prevent natural relationship (Mark 6:18<sup>1</sup>).

Paul said when the Lord separated him from his mother's womb and saved him by his grace that he conferred not with flesh and blood. Though, from his epistles, we know that he was a friend to those he ministered and was help to them both in carnal needs as well as spiritual. He knew and learned from experience that the one thing that was never to be compromised was the word of God. Huldah's words were short and to the point. She declared that the judgment coming was according to the word of God (v. 16). She also gave the reason, according to the Word, as to why the judgment would ensue (v. 17).

Once again, the indictment that has been so often spoken is again reiterated. The people have forsaken God and his true worship as He said they would (Deut. 31:16-18<sup>2</sup>). They burned incense to other gods. The burning of incense pointed to the coming of Christ and his intercessory work as the one mediator between men and God. By offering strange fire they were taking the place of Christ, substituting their works for His. They were offering their own merit in the place of Christ, disallowing the need of a mediator. That is at the heart of free will religion. Therefore, God's wrath is kindled against them and there is no

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<sup>1</sup> **Mark 6:18**, For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

<sup>2</sup> **Deut. 31:16-18**, And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

possibility of escape. The sure captivity and desolation is without repentance.

Then, in the midst of the terror of the Lord's words, amid judgment, the Lord shows mercy. The little, blessed conjunction “but” changes everything for Josiah (v.18). Though Judah will suffer and be destroyed, Josiah will not have to be around to observe the decimation of those he loved. There are things worse than death, and for the child of God, death is often the exercise of mercy. “But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord” say this, “You have heard the words concerning this nation and you have believed the Lord.”

Unlike the nation, *his* heart was touched and his heart is tender. The tender heart is the gift of God. This is one of those things that often is spoken to the elect and is a wonder. He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh. Josiah's heart is tender because the Lord had tenderized it, yet He gives credit to Josiah. Think of the times our Lord, who alone gives faith by grace, often honored the faith of His people. This tenderness of heart is often referred to in scripture and primarily speaks of Christ but also of His people (Ps. 51:17; Isa. 66:1-2<sup>1</sup>).

The source of this tenderness is the Word of God, the gospel. The gospel is not only the good news of the sinner's salvation, it is also the declaration of justice against all that rebel against God. The cross is where we see God's estimation of sin. The old hymn says:

“Ye who think of sin but lightly,  
nor suppose the evil great;  
Here may view its nature rightly,  
and its guilt may estimate.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ps. 51:17**, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

**Isa. 66:1-2**, Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Mark the sacrifice appointed,  
see who bears the awful load,  
'tis the Word, the Lord anointed,  
Son of Man and Son of God.”

(Stricken, Smitten and afflicted)

Josiah humbled himself when he heard what God was going to do to Judah. Josiah was broken when He heard of God's holy wrath against sin (v. 19). He rent his clothes and wept, and the Lord heard him. There is no indication that he cried out to God, but the tears of the saints are kept in a bottle, and the Lord knows the heart of the saint. His eyes are fixed on those in Christ. The Lord answers His children and shows mercy to them (v. 20).



# ICONOCLASM

## 2 Kings 23:1-20

1, And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2, And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3, And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

4, And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

5, And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6, And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the

children of the people.

7, And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

8, And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

9, Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

10, And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

11, And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12, And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13, And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14, And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15, Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake

down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

16, And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

17, Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel.

18, And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

19, And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel.

20, And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

**T**his passage is the record of the zeal of Josiah after he heard the word of the Lord concerning the judgment of Judah for its wholesale idolatry. We have seen in our previous studies the various ways that idolatry was introduced to Israel and Judah by a majority of the kings. Baal seems to be chief among the idols and his image is said by many Jewish historians to have been moved from place to place by the same priests that carried the ark of the covenant. It seems that since the time of Samuel that there has been a steady digression of the worship of the true God and a progressive addition of false god upon false god to the pantheon that is the target of Josiah's zeal.

Even those few kings that did right in the eyes of the Lord had allowed certain idolatrous practices to continue while these

who did evil not only allowed but promoted these additions. One of the greatest kings, Solomon was responsible, because of his prolific polygamy and concubinary, for introduction of numerous idols into their religious practices (v. 13). That he is held in high esteem in the record that God has given, speaks volumes of the grace of God toward ruined sinners who even though graced, still are plagued by the flesh. The flesh desires visible gods, icons, and idols, and though the kinds of idols that dotted the landscape in past times do not fill the auditoriums of churches in this day, those idols remain, having been given “Christian” names, and are worshiped as mediator and mediatrixes between men and God (e.g., pictures, crosses, statues of saints, medallions, and necklaces). Josiah had to contend with 350 years of progressive idolatry and the insidious menace had infiltrated almost every aspect of temple worship.

He began his glorious campaign by gathering the elders and priests to the temple and reading the word of God Himself. While there standing beside one the of the pillars of the Temple, he made a covenant with God to keep the commandment, walk in the statutes and observe his testimonies with all his soul and all his heart. The word “their” in italics (v. 3) is based on the people's response in the last phrase of verse 3. The Targum reads, “all the people took upon them the covenant.” Such collective promises of the people have been made since the law was first given, and as with every such human promise to serve God comes example after example of utter failure. But here, because of the zeal and leadership of this great young king, the greatest purge of idolatry in the history of Israel transpired.

To deal with every act of Josiah in depth would require too much time spent on the idols, but seeing the actions of Josiah is important. So, we will quote the account and touch on some of the practices that he put down.

First, compare verses 17-18 of the text to the prophesy found in 1 Kings 13.

Verses 17-18,

17, Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that *thou hast done against the altar of Bethel.*

18, And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

1 kings 13:1-3,

1, And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

2, And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, *Josiah by name*; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

3, And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

1 Kings 13:30-31,

30, And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!

31, And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones:

The destruction of the idols, the priests, the people, the skeletons, the altars, and disallowing of those practices were matters that dealt with actions and tangible things. Law cannot change the mind of idolatry, and after this great king would pass into history, the next king would once again do what was

evil in the sight of the Lord, and the people, like lemmings, would follow into captivity. The zeal of Josiah was real, good, and honorable, but it was the zeal of the King of kings who honored and satisfied the law to the degree that His death secured and accomplished the salvation of the elect, gave them new hearts and minds, and purged the conscience to serve the Living God. Their idolatrous flesh, though not destroyed, is subdued by the grace that God has bestowed upon them (Rom. 6:14<sup>1</sup>).

Just as all things in the Old Testament are types, shadows, and pictures of Christ and His work, Josiah's honorable actions point to the one who has spiritually dealt a death blow to idolatry in the hearts and minds of His people and in the end will destroy it altogether. If you noticed in our reading, three places played prominently in the destruction and discarding of the idols, their priests, and their followers. These three places were Kidron (vv. 4, 6, 12), Topheth (v. 10), and the valley of Hinnom (Gk. *geena* or *gehenna*—hell, v. 10).

The area of Kidron and the brook that ran from there to the Dead Sea was a vile open-air, maggot-infested latrine. Every manner of putrescence was cast into the brook. For nine months each year, trash, excrement, and the torn carcasses of offerings to idols were cast into that bloated basin. This was typical of sin and ruin, and pictured the sinner's natural estate before God, the natural end of all that proceeds from man, and his carnal appetites that, like a maggot, can only thrive off death and corruption. Once a year during the rainy season (Marschevan) the rains would fill the brook, and the mass of vileness would be washed away into the Dead Sea. This brook pictures the coming of Christ to accomplish the work of the salvation of the elect. He came to a world of sin and ruin to save His chosen. Scripture reveals in Psalm 110 that He drank from the brook. This is metaphorical prophecy of two things.

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<sup>1</sup> **Rom. 6:14**, For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

First, he took on humanity to be like those He came to save. The depth of that condescension, finite minds will never comprehend.

Secondly, drinking from the brook symbolically pictured our Lord, our substitute being made sin for us. The dregs of that cup are known and drank by one blessed man—THE MAN—Jesus Christ. His birth was during the season of Marschevan and pictured that former and latter rain that washed away the filth and sin into the Dead Sea, symbolizing our sins before God being washed away in the death of Christ.

Topheth and Hinnom are symbolic of hell (Isa. 30:33<sup>1</sup>). Our Lord referred to Hell as a place of everlasting fire and burning. It was here that the altars, the bones of the false priests, prophets, and those who followed them were burned and ground to powder picturing the coming of the Lord to be glorified in His saints—where death and hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The salvation of the elect is the destruction of the enemy.

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa. 30:33**, For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.





# THE GREATEST PASSOVER

## 2 Kings 23:21-25

21, And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

22, Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

23, But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24, Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

25, And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

**I**t is recorded in the Holy Writ concerning Josiah, “And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.” This kind of accolade was also attributed to Hezekiah, but this praise of Josiah is due to the Passover that he brought to pass. The greatness of its significance is that it was accomplished in the knowledge that Judah would soon go into captivity by Babylon, and Josiah would die and be gathered with the fathers before Judah fell. Josiah knew that the people were going into captivity and this

Passover, and the greatness of it, would be one of the last things they would be able to hold on to in their captivity. The preparations for this Passover were enormous. A lamb must be provided of each family, so the king gathered 30,000 lambs. He also gathered 3,000 bullocks for offerings made after the Passover. All were from his own flocks and herds and freely given to the families.

Everything necessary for this Passover was supplied by the king and this great event cost the people nothing. This is a picture of the salvation of the elect, freely accomplished by Christ, the King of kings, and the Lamb of God. The people were recipients of the king's bounty, even as the elect were given all spiritual blessings in Christ. This Passover was made for every family, every priest, every rich man, and every poor man. The wealthy willingly contributed 2,600 small cattle and 300 oxen. *Everyone* gladly took part in this Passover. The Ark of the Covenant was returned to the holy of holies; the singers and instrumentalists were called, and the people praised God with one voice in remembrance of their deliverance from the slavery and bondage of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb.

Time and time again in the Word, our Lord commanded His people, "But thou shalt *remember* that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence" (Deut. 24:18). Is this not what we do when we gather to worship God through the preaching of the gospel? Do we not gather to remember our deliverance from the bondage of law, sin, self, and Satan? Do we not rehearse each time we gather for the greatest Passover, even greater than the one that Josiah observed? Every time we receive the Lord's Table, do we not commemorate that Paschal Lamb slain for us that redeemed and saved us by His blood?

At the last supper, our Lord said to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). In that statement, He set aside the Old Covenant Passover and pointed to the New Covenant Passover

—Himself (1 Cor. 5:7<sup>1</sup>). Christ is our Paschal Lamb, and thus this characteristic, as the perfect, sinless, unblemished sacrifice is the heart of the gospel. Christ is the worthy Lamb (Rev. 5:9<sup>2</sup>), the sovereign omnipotent Lamb, viewed in the Revelation as the Lamb upon the throne, the avenging Lamb, before whom the infidels flee and tremble at “the terror of the Lamb.”

“Lamb of God, for sinners wounded;  
Sacrificed to cancel guilt;  
None shall ever be confounded  
Who on Him their hope is built.”

*(Stricken, smitten, and afflicted)*

In this short account we have in 2 Kings, we see in verse 24 something that first seems out of place. This verse would seem to fit better with the previous record of Josiah cleansing Judah of all the idols, priests, false teachers, and their followers. But often, the placement of a thing in scripture is there to teach an important principle. The Passover is a remembrance of the salvation of the people from the bondage of Egypt, but it is also the record of the destruction of that great, powerful, and cruel nation (See Ex. 15:1-13). So here at Josiah's observance of the Passover, the enemies of God are dealt with *once*, in wrath. Josiah's actions against these were according to the words of the book that Hilkiyah had read to him (Deut. 18:10-11; Lev. 20:27 Ex. 20:4-5 23:24<sup>3</sup>). Though our main enemy (ourselves, our flesh)

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Cor. 5:7**, Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

<sup>2</sup> **Rev. 5:9**, And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

<sup>3</sup> **Deut. 18:10-11**; There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

**Lev. 20:27**, A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

**Ex. 20:4-5**, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

is not yet destroyed, it is subdued by the Spirit through the gospel until that day when we leave this world to be with our Savior, at which time all that oppose Christ will utterly be destroyed, and the Lamb will be revealed as the King of kings and the Lord of Lords—for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

As we read of this great Passover in the reign of Josiah and rejoice at the enormous accomplishment of it, the history of kings that did right in the sight of the Lord were of no long-lasting effect. Josiah's legacy is protected by divine inspiration. But as all things done under that old covenant were never effectual to putting away sin or bringing in everlasting righteousness, so it will be as we approach the end of the books of kings.

Under that Old Covenant, men and women were to pursue personal righteousness through obedience to Law, and the scripture is clear by declaration and empirical example, that the best of men are but men at their best state. Even a *great* king under that covenant, a king like *none* before him, and none after, is but a man with derived, designated, and temporary power. What *must be*, for the Passover to be effectual, is that the King possess true, sovereign, underived, personal power. Such power is not invested in sinful flesh. Such power belongs to God alone, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Man has not even a modicum of power except it be given him from above.

As great as this bit of history is, we will see the human heart revealed in astounding and descriptive detail when this young hero is slain in battle and buried in the ground. We will once again be reminded that the flesh is utterly unable to mind anything but the things of the flesh, and our only hope lies solely in the One who is mighty to save—Christ the Paschal

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earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

23:24, Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

Lamb, The Lamb of God, the King of power, the Almighty.

The letter killeth; the Spirit maketh alive. The Old Covenant revealed by design that the sinner is shut up to grace and grace alone.



# NATURAL RELIGION

## 2 Kings 23:25-37

25, And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

26, Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

27, And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

28, Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

29, In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

30, And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

31, Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

32, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

33, And Pharaohnechoh put him in bands at Riblah in

the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

34, And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there.

35, And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh.

36, Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

37, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

**I**n this passage we have the account of the death of Josiah. His death was the accomplishment of the promised mercy of God. He was taken to glory so that he would not have to see the wrath of God poured out on Judah because of their idolatry and wholesale worship of false gods. God did not suffer His beloved servant to see the shameful estate of the people and kingdom he loved, and this was mercy as there are things worse than death.

As king, Josiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, instituted the greatest Passover ever observed, and brought the people to acknowledge that salvation is of the Lord. The Lord accounted Josiah as one of the greatest kings that ever reigned in Judah (v. 25). After the record of this Passover, we find it referenced only two more times in all of Scripture. It is recorded once in Ezra at the finish of the temple rebuild under the reign of Cyrus (Isa. 44:28<sup>1</sup>). Cyrus was the king of Persia and a tool

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. 44:28, That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my



in the hands of the Lord for the restoration of His people. Cyrus, though mightily tenderized toward Israel and honored by God, died with his pagan priests at his bedside.

The Passover is also referred to in Ezekiel. Though not specifically named, some of the elements of the Passover are mentioned in Malachi, but those mentioned refer to the degradation of the sacrifice and the abominations that the feasts and holy days had become (Mal. 1:6-8; 2:13; 3:13-15<sup>1</sup>).

Then after 400 years of silence, the passover is again spoken of by the very one who *is* “our Passover, sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). It is then that the Lamb of God took the passover with His disciples, appropriately called the last supper. At that passover feast, the Old Testament was explained for what it was, the testimony of Christ shrouded in picture and type (Luke 22:13<sup>2</sup>). That night our Lord took the bread and the wine and told the disciples that *He* was the Passover Lamb. He was the Paschal sacrifice saying, “Take this bread and eat it, this is my body broken for you, and this wine is the New Testament, or New Covenant in my blood and it shows forth my death” (1 Cor. 11:24-25). In that moment the Old Covenant passed away and behold, all things were made new. The passover recalled the

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pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

<sup>1</sup> **Mal. 1:6-8**, A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

**2:13**, And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

**3:13-15**, Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

<sup>2</sup> **Luke 22:13**, And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

blood of the *natural* lamb, by which *natural* Israel was delivered from *natural* Egypt. This passover, which the Lord had desired to eat with His chosen, delivered His people from their sins, redeemed, saved, justified, and sanctified His *spiritual* people, and as the church observes the Lord's Table, they worshipfully commemorate that blessed death, "our passover slain for us" that accomplished and finished our salvation.

As great as Josiah's passover was, it was but an exercise in a natural religion, observed by a natural population and never reached to the *spiritual* realm. This is clearly seen as the next king, the son of Josiah, immediately reinstitutes pagan worship in the temple of the Lord. Though he reigned only three months, ending up in Egypt and dying there (Jer. 22:11<sup>1</sup>), his brother who reigned in his stead did evil in the sight of the Lord as well, in the manner of Manasseh and Amon. And so it must be for any and every religion that is practiced under a system of laws that conditions its blessings or cursings on the *obedience* or *disobedience* of its adherents.

The religion of works for righteousness and acceptance before God is not only doomed to fail but possesses no allegiance to the true and living God, readily adopting anything that is called god, even though it bears little resemblance to God Almighty.

The god of today's Christianity bears no resemblance to the God of Scripture and possesses no qualities that are conducive to worship. That puny sad god's attributes are conducive to pity, a god whose hands are tied, who waits on the permission of the creature to act. He is but a poor, feckless, solicitous beggar waiting with bated breath for the favorable inclination of the will of wretched man—Man *will* worship. That is what man was made for, but it matters not who or what he worships as long as the god is *subject to him* as he exercises his voluntary

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 22:11, For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more.

humility and worship of his *own* will.

Thus, we see Judah careening head-long into the abyss of idolatry, and at last, before entering captivity to Babylon, it is ironically just as it was in the first. Having just observed the greatest Passover in celebrating their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, we find the people once again in the bondage of Egypt, financially bound to a pagan slave-master. Every man is forced to pay taxes to Pharaoh. Back in the wilderness, this was their fearful desire (Num. 14:1-4<sup>1</sup>). God gave them their desire and sent leanness to their souls. They that are of the flesh do mind the things of the flesh. A natural escape from Egypt is but a precursor to a natural return to Egypt. Legalism fears freedom as nature despises a vacuum. Works religion fears freedom as much as the freeman fears bondage.

Thank God for grace, sovereign, free, effectual grace, that takes the prisoner, looses his bonds, and sets him free. Thank God for Christ who shattered the shackles of sin, that overcame the powers that held us and set us at liberty, never to be sold on the slave market again. He is our Passover slain for us. Praise Him that He did not leave us to our own devices to follow the dictates of our carnal hell-bent nature but butted in, interrupted our woeful career, reached down into the mire, jerked us out, and set our feet on the solid Rock. Thank Him heartily that He put you in a place to hear the gospel of your salvation and gave you faith to believe.

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and Egypt's night:  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,

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<sup>1</sup> **Num. 14:1-4**, And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart set free;  
I rose, went forth and followed thee.”

*(And Can It Be)*

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Eph. 2:1-5)

# CAPTIVITY

## 2 Kings 24-25

2 Kings 24:

1, In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

2, And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

3, Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;

4, And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

5, Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

6, So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

7, And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

8, Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

9, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

10, At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of

Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

11, And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

12, And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13, And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

14, And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

15, And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

16, And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

17, And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18, Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

19, And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

20, For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

## 2 Kings 25:

1, And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2, And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

3, And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

4, And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain.

5, And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

6, So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7, And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

8, And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

9, And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

10, And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

11, Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with

the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.

12, But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

13, And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.

14, And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

15, And the firepans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away.

16, The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

17, The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and the chapter upon it was brass: and the height of the chapter three cubits; and the wreathen work, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen work.

18, And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

19, And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city:

20, And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:

21, And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

22, And as for the people that remained in the land of



Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.

23, And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Careah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

24, And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.

25, But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

26, And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees.

27, And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison;

28, And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon;

29, And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life.

30, And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

**T**his is the account of the fall, destruction, and captivity of Judah at the hand of the kings of Babylon according to the promise and will of God. In these chapters, we are introduced to Nebuchadnezzar and Evilmerodach (Belshazzar), two kings that played heavy parts in the history of the captivity recorded in the book of Daniel.

During the reigns of these two kings of Babylon, three kings reigned in Judah. That they *reigned* in Judah is a qualitative notion in that they reigned at the behest of Nebuchadnezzar and were kings in name only as they served Babylon as mere emissaries and gofers for the kings of Babylon. Though they wore the crown, they were but marionettes whose strings were pulled at the whim of Babylon. Babylon exercised political savvy by allowing Judah to keep some of their political identity.

The first king of Judah was Jehoiakim. This was not his given name. His given name was Eliakim. He was a son of Josiah but was not the rightful king. His brother Jehoahaz had reigned only three months when he was captured and carried away to Egypt. Pharaohnechoh, king of Egypt, made Eliakim king in Judah, and showing his authority, he gave Eliakim the name Jehoiakim. This told the king of Judah in no uncertain terms that he was in submission to Egypt, and to nail that fact down, he was forced to pay tribute to Egypt.

This Jehoiakim “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” and soon found himself under attack at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He served Babylon three years. Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon with the promise of help from Egypt, but when Egypt was routed by Babylon, Jehoiakim's reign came to an abrupt end. He was a bloody man and was responsible for mass murder, and the Lord used the Chaldeans (servants of Babylon) to halt his vicious career. His death was recorded in simple terms. How he died is not recorded, but how he was buried is recorded—he was not buried with the kings of Judah.

He was buried in infamy (Jer. 22:18-19<sup>1</sup>). This was the Lord's doing (24:4-7).

The next king of Judah was the last before their complete captivity. His name was Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim and grandson of Josiah and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. When Babylon laid siege against Judah, Jehoiachin surrendered and was carried away and imprisoned along with his household, and Judah was looted. All the riches of Solomon, the gold and silver of the temple, were carried away, and the men and women of Judah were taken into captivity to Babylon. Only the poor were left behind to tend the vineyards. Jehoiachin remained in prison until Evilmerodach reigned in Babylon.

While Jehoiachin was imprisoned, Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, to be king of Judah. And once again to show that Judah was the servant of Babylon, Mattaniah's name was changed to Zedekiah. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He rebelled against Babylon, and his rebellion resulted in the final fulfillment of the anger of God against Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar came against Judah and destroyed everything. Zedekiah was captured, his sons were slain, and Nebuchadnezzar poked out his eyes, bound him in brass shackles and took him to Babylon. Then came the final destruction (25:8-21). All those things sanctified for the honor and glory of God, ill-used, and mixed with idols by numerous kings, (all but a few doing evil in God's sight)—the temple, the brazen sea, the altar, the table of shew-bread, the golden altar, and the ark of the covenant are carried away to Babylon (Iraq). All are carried to the site of the first collective rebellion against God, the site where God confounded the language, and it is the name of the great religious nation where Christ will finally reek

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 22:18-19, Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

destruction of the world and completely deliver his elect.

As Judah and Jerusalem lay in smoldering ruin, there lies beneath this pile of ashes a sure hope. Judah seems no more, but God has promised that Judah will not utterly be destroyed because of the covenant He made with David. Out of Judah will come the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the only high priest that arose not from Levi, but from Judah. For Zion's sake, God will not be silent. The people shall return and rebuild the temple. Sadly, the way of the people will repeat what has gone on before till the messenger of the covenant shall suddenly appear in the temple, as God lays flesh upon the Word—Christ the Lord (Mal. 3:1<sup>1</sup>). This temple will be destroyed and raised again on the third day, and all Israel, the elect according to grace, shall be saved (John 2:19<sup>2</sup>).

It is the Lord who is the architect of providence, and for those who might wonder at it, our Lord declares this truth, “He that killeth and maketh alive, that brings down and raises up, maketh rich and maketh poor, that raises the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes” (1 Sam. 2:6-8). Isaiah wrote,

“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though

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<sup>1</sup> **Mal. 3:1**, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

<sup>2</sup> **John 2:19**, Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

thou hast not known me.

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” (Isa. 45:1-9).

For now, there is captivity, and the gospel according to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel shall point the captives to the coming Messiah, and Ezra and Nehemiah will record the rebuilding of the temple. The Word of God endureth forever and he shall get Himself the glory. Who is a God like unto our God?

In chapter 25:27-30, as if to give us some sense of the control, manipulation, and employment of His enemies, and how, though God uses them to chastise His people, we have the record of kindness exercised toward one of Judah at the hands of Evilmerodach (Ps. 37:23-25; Mic. 7:8-9<sup>1</sup>).

Remember the reason and result for chastisement.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God

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<sup>1</sup> **Ps. 37:23-25**, The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

**Mic. 7:8-9**, Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:6-11).