

**EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



## **2 KINGS 1-13**

**(Lives of the Later Kings – Vol 2)**

**BY**

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**2 KINGS CHAPTER 1****INTRODUCTION**

Elijah continues to serve, but in increasingly pagan times again. The northern kings are sliding downhill further and further each generation, but God's man is still empowered to speak and to witness that the power of God is always mightier than the power of the gods who are under Satan's control. The great confrontation at Mt Carmel has produced no lasting results for the northern kingdom of Israel.

Some have spoken of this event as a great revival, but it was nothing of the kind, for few in Israel returned to the Lord their God, and most kept practising their paganism. Some were saved and we will meet some in this chapter, but most remained on the easy road of comfort and eventual destruction.

Our writer advances with his account of the contrast between the two kingdoms, and the steady march of events towards God's final judgement of His rebellious people. Even in the midst of their almost total rebellion against the truth, the prophets still speak to the rebels against God. Grace is present in the midst of paganism, as the Lord seeks to win His people back to the truth. Luke 19:10.

God's graciousness is what we see on every page of the books of the kings, and yet man's sinfulness overwhelms grace most times and sadly the people perish! The role of the prophet is to tell truth, but they cannot guarantee that the truth will be received and accepted. Ezekiel 3:4-20, 21-27.

Paganism, like all satanic religions, is pleasant to the eyes, pleasurable to the senses, and makes no moral demands upon its adherents. Satan makes no demands upon man except to stay on the "broad way" that leads to their eventual destruction. Matthew 7:13-14.

The modern American falsehood of "Easy believism" type religions are the philosophy of Satan himself, for he seeks to distract man from the need for total life change. Satan has argued since the beginning in the very garden of Eden that God is tolerant, and will not judge man too harshly for what he argues are simply, "little moral slip ups!" Genesis 3:1-7. It is the slackness of man's religion towards true morality that is always the sign of its satanic origins.

Remember Godly religion always leads to morality and positive life change. The genuine faith/belief that saves man is never without total life change. Satan however doesn't care what people believe is true, as long as it doesn't change their path in life! Satan knows that the Lord's demand is holiness of heart and life, and that men find that onerous, and so he has a series of easier religious and non-religious options for all mankind.

God however has always demanded life change and spiritual fruitfulness as the real response to any confrontation with the truth. Matthew 7:15-15-27, 13:3-9, 18-23, James 2:14-26. We must have a faith that shows more dynamism than the satanic acceptance of the truth about God's existence. James 2:19. Just ticking boxes about theological truth proves nothing except academic study to a stage 1 level. Genuine faith is the walk along the narrow mountain path with Jesus, it is not a casual stroll down easy street.

Let us stand for God's truth, even if our nation goes the way of the Northern Kingdom. Let us save those who can be saved from the paganism that Satan will always ensure surrounds us all. This situation is only temporary however; until the day the Lord judges this enemy of all truth and righteousness. Until that day let us stand as Elijah's in our generation. Jude 20-25, Revelation 20:10ff.

**2 KINGS 1:1-18**

**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?

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 2.** Ahab has seen the power of God upon Mt Carmel (1 Kings 18), and his son knows of this great victory of the Lord over the prophets of Baal, yet when he gets sick, within two years of his father's death, he turns to the prophets of Baalzebub again. The Baal he turns to is not the Baal of his mother, but the Philistine version of the Baal worship, the "Lord of the Flies" (Baalzebub). This was the blood thirsty Baal who while still the god of sex and fertility, was also the god of war and death, and whose many blood sacrifices (including child and adult sacrifices) drew the flies in around his blood spattered head in droves, (hence his title).

The sadness of paganism is that its hold over people deepens as each generation moves onwards, and so the son becomes worse than the father unless salvation alters things. This robustly pagan Baal was seen by the pagans as the counter weight to Israel's real God, and they believed that this robust and strong form of paganism, (with its adherents ready to kill their own children in its worship), was strong enough to take on the God of Israel and defeat Him.

Meditate upon this situation here believer and all pastors! Remember that all the "power confrontations" in the world will not change the stony heart of any determined pagan. Our task upon this earth is not to save men, for we cannot do that, but to tell them the truth and leave their choices regarding the truth with them and the Lord. The great sadness we will all face in this life is seeing determined pagan friends going to hell with the truth in their ears, but the truth rejected. We must face this reality and keep our eyes fixed upon our Saviour, and His path for us. Let us learn from Elijah.

The arrogance of paganism is foolishness to an extreme; to believe that a creature can defeat the creator! Paganism starts however from a secure base. Those who believe in the power of the primal gods, do so because they have first rejected the true Creator God, and such people Satan knows want to believe he is more powerful than God and will overwhelm Him in the end. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12. At the heart of Satan's rebellion is his own arrogance and self deception, for he believes he may even win in the end, and he has drawn those to him who share this false hope.

Ahaziah was just such a man. He has followed his mother Jezebel in the worship of Baal, but opted for the apparently stronger and more sexually perverted form of Baal worship of the Philistines. He feels secure in his paganism, but it is false security. He falls through a lattice work floor, or screen, in the upper floor of his palace. These were fitted in palaces to enable the king to overhear the conversations of his courtiers below without him being seen above them.

The security device fails him, and he falls, and has internal injuries, and is seriously ill in bed. He sends to the local Baal cultic temple at Ekron, a Philistine city that was tributary to Israel. He asks for a horoscope about his fate. All such dabbling in the occult is forbidden for believers, and was punishable by death under the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 19:31, 20:1-6, Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

The Lord had made it very clear through Moses that when His people walked away from His path, then they would experience a removal of the Lord's protection from them, both economically and militarily. Leviticus 26:14-40, Deuteronomy 27-28. The judgement of the Lord upon His rebellious people would follow a set pattern, so that each time it occurred they could see the truth and repent of their evils.

Divine Discipline for their evils would come in five cycles of discipline. By the time we enter this chapter, the Northern Kingdom of Israel is almost permanently in the third to fourth cycle of discipline. Moab's rebellion and the inability of Ahaziah to deal with it is the sign from the Lord that the nation has fallen and remained under satanic influence and control. They are judged by God and need total repentance or the discipline will deepen. Nothing stays the same in this life; there is no marking time in the army of the Lord, or amongst the servants of Satan. We are all either going forward in service or backwards into discipline.

**Verse 3 – 8.** The Angel of the Lord is sent to meet Elijah. The Angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ, and when He is sent to any man in the Old Testament period the message is a serious one and normally indicates some aspect or other of His later work as the Saviour. Whenever an angelic visitation occurs it is for a serious purpose; it is never for entertainment value. Be very wary today of those who claim visitations, for they are most likely visitations of the angel of light and his deceptive and devious demonic forces. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

I have met with a man recently who saw what he reported to me as, “the most beautiful (female) angelic being that he had ever imagined, and she stood and smiled and held her arms out”. This beautiful being said nothing, but was most alluring. He described her, and her appearance resembled in my assessment the pagan goddess Diana, Aphrodite, Astarte (Baal’s consort). All angelic beings from the Lord described in scripture are male, and they always act or speak in a manner to give urgent and effective warning for real service. Any such entertaining vision, especially if there is any sexuality in it at all, is almost certainly from the enemy and to be treated as such.

The Angel of the Lord has a specific word of judgement for Ahaziah. The message is short and to the point and Elijah is tasked with delivery of it to the servants of the king. He is not to deliver it to the king himself as that would lead to Elijah’s certain death and that is not the Lord’s purpose at this time. There is a time to speak and die a martyr, and there is a time to speak in such a way to avoid martyrdom; the task of the servant of the Lord is to obey the Lord in every situation, and so discern between the two paths. There is a time to die, but for Elijah it is not yet.

Having given the message Elijah leaves the servants of the evil king, and heads up a near by hill and sits on the top to await the next move of the king. The servants of the evil king return to the king and report the message, and thanks to the king’s curiosity and malice, we have a description of the appearance of Elijah. He was a hairy man, clothed in rough clothing, and with a great leather belt around his waist holding up his clothing so he could run when he needed to.

Having given the message Elijah’s orders now are to wait on the top of this hill. He must wait for the enemy to come to him; they are to be given the initiative in order that they might be judged. During the drought, 1 Kings 17, Elijah was ordered to hide, and now he is ordered to wait in his own house where the evil men can easily find him. Once again we are confronted with the Lord’s demand of us to be obedient in each situation, and to be ready to do different things at different times.

**Verses 9 – 12.** The king’s malice towards the prophet is now seen. He immediately sends a squad of fifty men to kill the prophet. Elijah’s faith is again tested, for he is able to see these men leave the palace and spot him upon the hill and head straight towards him with drawn swords. He knows their orders and their fixed intention to carry them out, and he must relax in the Lord’s protection over him and pray as he sees them draw ever nearer by the minute.

The first army officer approaches Elijah and orders him to come down to face execution. Elijah challenges this officer, saying that if he is indeed a “Man of God” then the Lord will judge this officer’s evil intentions and slay him with fire from heaven exactly as the fire fell on Mt Carmel. 1 Kings 18:38ff. The fire falls and all fifty one men are slain before the prophet. Ahaziah sends another fifty men with their officer to bring the prophet down for execution, and they suffer the same fate.

**Verses 13 – 18.** The third officer sent is a believer in God and a man who acknowledges Elijah as not just the Lord’s prophet, but as their teacher and prophet also. These are men who may have been upon Mt Carmel that day several years before, and they have been saved by their encounter with the living God whereas their colleagues who have died were not. This believing officer humbly seeks the prophet’s obedience to the king’s command, and makes it clear that no harm will come to him now.

The Angel of the Lord once again appears to Elijah (it is not clear whether others could see him – Acts 9:1-7) and tells him that it is safe to accompany the soldiers and see the king. He will be protected in the very court of the evil king, for now the death of the two companies of evil soldiers has opened the door to safety for the prophet. When Elijah comes into the presence of the king he does not change or add to his previous message, relayed by the servants of the king. He simply gives it again directly to the king in person now. The king takes no action against Elijah, for the Lord has judged him, and the Lord’s hand is over Elijah, and so the evil king dies as was foretold by the prophet.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Let us stand like Elijah, telling the truth in troubled and rebellious times. Let us remember that we save no man, but the work we are tasked with is the telling of the Gospel truth to all men who will hear it. We leave the work within the soul of fallen men and women to the Holy Spirit who will convict all of their need of a Saviour. John 16:8-11. Let us be faithful and determined people in our service of the Lord, and let us give the truth and then move onwards, leaving the lost to come to terms with their own choices. Let us not be distracted by their decision making, or by their fate, for we are called to keep our eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus only.

2. We are called to absolute obedience to the Lord and His will for our life. We are neither to add, nor subtract from the words the Lord gives us to speak, but like Elijah, give the truth simply and clearly to all who will hear and then leave them with the truth and move onwards to our next tasking before the Lord.

3. Let us not be side tracked from our servant role upon this earth by any thing, or any person, or any decision of another. Let us serve the Lord with focused concentration. In each and every situation we must be ready to be totally obedient to the demands of the Lord alone.

4. We are in the Lord’s hands for life and for death. Our sole concern on our journey through this life is to walk as the Lord directs and play the part we are called to play in the great unfolding drama of redemption. Let us walk as we are called, not trying to be any other person than the one we are called to be in Christ Jesus.

## **REFLECTION UPON RELIGION**

1. Satan's religion is a humanly acceptable one: no sin, no judgement, no Saviour and no Hell. Satan appears as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-19,26)
2. Many pastors in the churches are servants of Satan's policy, knowingly or unknowingly. (Isaiah 30:12, Jeremiah 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-10)
3. Satan's strategy towards unbelievers is to keep them blinded to the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Colossians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)
4. Satan's strategy towards believers is:-
  - a) To confuse by false teaching. (Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:18)
  - b) To appeal to pride. (2 Corinthians 10:12)
  - c) To promote idolatry. (Habakkuk 2:18,19)
  - d) To promote legalism. (1 Timothy 1:7-8)
5. Satan's policy calls for counterfeit faith:-
  - a) Counterfeit gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)
  - b) Counterfeit pastors. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
  - c) Counterfeit communion. (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)
  - d) Counterfeit doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1)
  - e) Counterfeit righteousness. (Matthew 19:16-28)
  - f) Counterfeit way of life. (Matthew 23)
  - g) Counterfeit power. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10)
  - h) Counterfeit gods. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

## **APOSTASY**

1. Apostasy means falling away.
2. Apostasy differs from backsliding. A true Christian can backslide; an apostate is never born again, e.g. Judas Iscariot.
3. The backslidden Christian breaks fellowship, but doesn't lose his salvation. (John 5:24)
4. The apostate is declared in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and 1 John 2:19.
5. Apostates may do good works calling themselves Christians but they should not be accepted as such. (2 John 9-11, John 10:12-13).
6. There will be a great apostasy prior to the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

## **WORLDLINESS**

1. Worldliness means to follow the beliefs and philosophy of man rather than that of God
2. Worldliness is the opposite to godliness; it is thinking/doing in opposition to God's revealed word. Titus 2:11-14.
3. All people are faced with the constant choice of following God's way or the world's. Romans 5:12, 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 2:12, James 1:27, 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20.
4. Satan is the "prince of this world", and has power to deceive those who are negative to God's plans. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8,9.
5. We must not love the world, 1 John 2:15-17.
6. We must hate all the world stands for, in thought and in deed. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:30-32, Galatians 6:14, James 1:27, James 4:4, 2 Peter 1:3,4, 1 Corinthians 3:18, 19.
7. We must not return to our old behaviour patterns, Ephesians 2:1-7.
8. This evil world system and the prince of this world will be condemned. Matthew 18:7, John 12:31, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 2:1ff.

**CHAPTER 2****INTRODUCTION**

Elijah has had a long and eventful life and his ending is unique amongst the Old Testament saints, and is unparalleled even in the New Testament and Church Age. This is a man who apparently does not die, but is carried alive up to heaven in a great whirlwind, and what is described as a "chariot of fire". Now the naturalistic explanation of this event is that he does die, just as Moses dies, but that his place of burial is unknown because of the manner of his departure from this life.

The naturalists will explain the end of Elijah's life as his being caught up into the midst of a sudden tornado and carried higher and higher within it until he is lost to sight of those who witness the event. This may indeed be a part of the truth about the way the Lord removed him from this earth, but the reality we face here is that those of his own day believed he had not died, but entered heaven. There is a lot more here than a tornado, for while the winds of a tornado or hurricane are described, there is the reference to a "chariot of fire" also, and it is clear as we go through the account that the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, is apparently the driver of this amazing chariot.

Hurricane force winds and Tornadoes were known in that day and their track was easily followed from the carrion trail left behind. Men always gathered what was dropped by natural phenomenon like tornadoes, so had Elijah been caught up by a tornado his body would likely have been found as the path of a tornado is easily tracked along the ground; his body was not found, and it was searched for. There is a lot more here than a tornado, even if that is here as a part of the event. There is mystery here, and let us embrace it, for it is the only explanation that makes sense from the words that the writer uses.

Elisha begins his ministry after the departure of Elijah, and the means of the departure is a crucial aspect of Elisha's acceptance by the other prophets and the believers of the day. The things that occur here made it clear to all who observed them that God was doing a special work in their land and that this man Elisha was the true replacement of the great Elijah. We have a number of miracles here and there is no way around them for the sceptic. There is no problem with these for the true believer. Let us remember that our God is the creator, and the things we will see in the next chapters are no problem for the creator God.

**2 KINGS 2:1-25**

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? 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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 3.** There is a strange interaction between the prophets here. Commentators are divided on why Elijah tries to get Elisha to leave him half way from Gilgal to Bethel, and then afterwards several more times. These were the two towns in the north with schools of the prophets, possibly established by Elijah, where young men were trained in the Word of God. There is no training to be a prophet, for it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, sovereignly given, but training is needed in understanding God's Word; his revealed revelation, against which all prophetic truth is to be tested. Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:15-22, Matthew 24:24, 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, 2 Peter 2:1ff.

In these verses we see that Elijah knows he is to be removed dramatically by the "whirlwind", but independently also all the prophets of Bethel also know this, and also so does Elisha. Confirmation of a message is the important hallmark of a correct prophecy and a true prophet. An unconfirmed message (by an event, or another's word of knowledge also) is not a message from the Lord at all.

Does Elijah test Elisha's love for him or the Lord here? There is no need for him to do this, for the younger man is certified by the Lord's call upon him and their previous working together. The testing of God's special servants is to be done by the Lord alone, for He alone knows what is required ahead, and so can tailor the testing to the man. Elijah doesn't need to test Elisha in any way at all, and so the only reason for his urging Elisha to leave must be for privacy and other personal reasons, although there may also be the challenge for Elisha to remain obedient to the end in this interchange and the others.

The old prophet knows he is about to leave this earth in a very special way. He may wish some to witness the event, but the sadness of parting from Elisha may be a thing he doesn't want as a distraction from his enjoyment of the ride the Lord has promised him out of this world. At the time of death a number of important people have experienced this emotion; desiring their loved ones to be away from them at the end, so that nothing distracts them from their departure, and that their loved ones do not experience too much distress.

Elijah may have been trying to protect Elisha from some aspect of his departure, but whatever the truth here Elisha is having nothing of it, and is determined to be there until the very end. He tells the prophets of Bethel that they are to keep quiet so he and they can concentrate upon what is going to happen and hear anything that is to be heard.

**Verses 4 – 7.** It may be that these men were the survivors of the persecution of Ahab, or that they are a mixed group, of old faithful servants of the Lord and new graduates of Elijah's theological colleges. We are not told. Elijah now speaks of heading down to Jericho, the opposite direction to Bethel, from Gilgal. He asks Elisha to wait for him, and yet Elisha knows that this day his master leaves this earth, so he refused to budge from his master's side. Even if his master says, "leave", he will not leave, for the Lord has told him to stay this day until his master goes.

Elijah may be thinking of the temptation of the prophet who had come to Bethel many years before and been killed by the lion because he forgot to keep absolutely the words of the Lord. 1 Kings 13:1-30. This is also a reminder that we need to hold to the written revelation of the Lord even if the most persuasive speaker rises up and says another thing. Matthew 24:23-28, 2 Thessalonians 2:9.

The sons of the prophets at Jericho also come out and report that they too have the revelation of the Lord regarding the departure of Elijah that day. The phrase "from thy head" is a strange one and may refer to the fact that Elijah is to be literally caught up above the head of Elisha and carried off. The old prophet tries again to get Elisha to stay in Jericho, but he will have none of it, and the two men cross the plain of Jordan together and stand by the river. The prophets of the school in Jericho stand a distance away, for they know something special is about to occur.

Another reason for the urging of Elijah for Elisha to remain behind may be the dangers associated with his means of departure also, and the other prophets may appreciate this, and for this reason keep their distance. Now at this point, refer to a Bible lands map and see just how far these men have been walking these last couple of days. Elijah is certainly not dying of old age and decrepitude this day, for they have walked many miles together at a fast pace. This man is going out of this world in his prime, and that is God's plan, for God's timing for our leaving this world is our right time; our prime of life, whatever age that may be.

**Verses 8 – 10.** Jordan may have been in full flood at the time they were there together, and a miracle is performed to enable them to cross over and move away form the eyes of others. Elijah takes two deliberate actions at their approach to the raging waters. He takes off his cloak and wraps it into a bundle and possibly hands it to Elisha while he picks up his staff ready to smite the waters. The cloak may just as likely have been held by Elijah, but the next time we hear of it is when it lands upon the shoulders of Elisha. It may be Elijah makes a bundle of it so that he will be able to throw it more effectively when he is uplifted by the whirlwind.

Elijah then smites the waters and they divide to allow the two men to cross alone. The school of the prophet's members are now standing on city-side bank with the two prophets on the other side. They are now heading towards the hills where the Israelites camped before entering the land, and where Moses left this earth also, and it is an area where they will have privacy to ensure all is said and done that is needed before Elijah leaves. Deuteronomy 34:1ff. Elijah's mental attitude is one of pleasant expectation and relaxation. Like St Paul he sees the leaving of this life as the casting off of the ship of the soul on a new and exciting journey. 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

As they advance away from the river Elijah asks Elisha for any gift that he desires before their parting. This is a good question pastor, to test your self on right now also. Ask yourself, if you could request anything at all, what would you ask for from the Lord? Then pause and reflect, for we are all able to do this any day at all. What is it that you seek for your life, and what is it that hinders you asking for it, or receiving it from the Lord?

Elisha immediately knows what he seeks, and that is a 'double portion' of the Holy Spirit upon him for his coming ministry after Elijah's departure. He seeks twice the power that Elijah had access to in order to achieve twice the ministry if that was within the Lord's will for him. During the period before Pentecost the Holy Spirit would come upon people for specific tasking and then leave again, and what Elisha is requesting is that the Spirit will rest upon him twice as much as he did upon Elijah. It is a request for more service, and the power to accomplish it in the plan of God.

Elijah requests of Elisha that he stay close by him until he goes, and that as he goes, if Elisha is close by, he will see what he can do. From this strange request for Elisha to be very close by, I believe that Elijah was going to request this of the Lord, when he was picked up by the Lord, and directly ask the Lord for this blessing for Elisha, and point to Elisha as he made the request. In the ancient world, to make a request to a king for another, required that other person to be there, and standing right by the throne and be pointed to as the request was made. If I am correct with this interpretation, it makes it absolutely clear that Elijah's expectation was to be personally delivered from this life to the next by the Angel of the Lord Himself. This is indeed what will occur.

**Verses 11 – 13.** Notice the words and their obvious meaning. Remember here the words of Dr David L Cooper, "when the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest you find nonsense". As the two men walk along there is an amazing sight emerges from the heavens; a blazing chariot of fire, pulled by horses that are fire, and they come with the mighty wind and probably the noise and appearance of a tornado. The mighty wind brushes Elisha aside like a piece of matchwood, and then picks up Elijah bodily into the chariot, and carries him up and away into heaven. It is an awesome sight, but a sad one for Elisha, for Elijah was like a father to him, and no matter how long you have a loved father, you want him longer with you.

He calls the chariot, "the chariot of Israel", and the horsemen also the horsemen of Israel. Now remember that the name Israel means "Prince of God". It is this reference that makes me believe that the driver of the chariot was the Lord Jesus Christ (The Angel of the Lord). There is no reference to horsemen initially, only the chariot of fire and its horses of fire, but there is clear reference to the horsemen in the final description. Chariots did have riders at times upon their horses, and it appears that either this is what occurs here, or the chariot is accompanied by other angelic horsemen. Who are these horsemen? We are not told, and speculation does not greatly assist us here, nor add to the drama, uniqueness, and awesomeness of the event.

The Lord has many "chariots of fire" and many angelic horsemen to do his bidding. Psalms 68:17, 104:1-5, Habakkuk 3:8, Zechariah 6:1-8. Whenever angelic beings enter the realm of man so dramatically, it is an indication that there is something here of great prophetic significance centring in the person involved or the event. This is an awesome and unique event, and so we have no others against which it can be compared, but from other forward looking prophetic passages it appears to prefigure End Times, and Elijah certainly appears to be one of the two witnesses who return to Israel to warn them of the final judgement during the Great Tribulation period. It may be that it will only be during that final phase of Israel's history that this departure of Elijah will receive full explanation.

We do not need to speculate about space craft or anything else with this dramatic departure of Elijah. Had it been a space craft with so called "aliens" he would not have been as relaxed as he was. The Lord is here in the midst of this and that means Elijah can relax and rejoice in his unique deliverance to heaven, and Elisha, after his grief is expressed, can draw strength from the Lord's deliverance of his master, and set out to try to deliver his people from their paganism. Focus upon the presence of the Lord here, as the two prophets do, and leave speculations about the actual nature of this "chariot" until you see one in heaven!

**Verses 14 – 15.** As Elijah leaves he throws his mantle toward Elisha and it lands around his shoulders. This is another indication that this "whirlwind" is no ordinary tornado, for there is no throwing anything out of a tornado. Elisha weeps for his master, but only for a short time, for he knows that his master is with their Lord. This is a glimpse of the true nature of a mature believer's grief.

We weep for the loss of great believers in our family and friend network because we are sorry for ourselves! We are sorry that we won't see them until we reach heaven, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope, for we have absolute confidence that we will see them again, and be with them forever. We see this wonderfully portrayed in the response of David to the cot-death of his first child to Bathsheba. 2 Samuel 12:13-23. We are also challenged about this by Paul. 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

With the mantle of Elijah upon his shoulders Elisha faces the first test of power when he stands before the swollen river Jordan. Elisha asks the question aloud, "Where is the God of Elijah?" He does this facing the river, and with the prophets from Jericho and the other places over the river from him. I suspect he does this very loudly so that they all can hear him above the rush of the water. He knows where God is, and that He is with him now, and he knows God will demonstrate His power through him. When Elisha smites the river with the staff of Elijah the river parts, just as it did an hour or so before. The prophets who have accompanied the two prophets, but stayed on the other side of the river, have witnessed the chariot of fire from afar, but see the two partings of the river close up, and they all acknowledge that the Lord is with Elisha, just as He was with Elijah, and they all accept Elisha as Elijah's successor.

**Verses 16 – 18.** The prophets of the Lord had clearly seen the whirlwind and the chariot of fire in the midst carrying Elijah up and away. They had also clearly seen tornadoes before and understood that animals and people were picked up and carried by them some distance at times, and that bodies were found if they were sought for on the tornadoes path (which is always easy to follow due to its destructive force on the ground). Fifty men persistently seek permission to search for the body of Elijah. This was an adequate search party to follow the path of any tornado and recover all bodies dropped by the storm. Elisha initially refuses them permission to search, but finally relents and so the fifty men set off and search for the body of Elijah for three full days.

They return having found nothing and Elisha tells them bluntly that he "told them so". God had taken Elijah to heaven, and his body was not there to be found. The determined efforts of these men does tell us that the chariot of fire rose from the earth in close association with the appearance of a super-natural tornado, as these men were quite certain in their minds regarding their search and had clearly done this sort of thing before with other tornadoes. Their urgency in requiring permission to search for the body tells us that they were certain that they believed Elijah's body could be found. They have to be convinced that this phenomenon is quite different to anything they have seen before, even though it shared a common element (the tornado like appearance).

**Verses 19 – 22.** The locals of Jericho request Elisha to stay with them and take over leadership of their local "theological college". They speak of the pleasantness of the climate and situation of their city to entice Elisha to stay. It is a reminder that physical factors regarding a place are never any guide at all to the will of the Lord regarding the spiritual tasking in that place. If a place of service has a pleasant climate and physical situation, then that is a bonus, but it is not a factor to be used to decide the will of the Lord.

This city was cursed by Joshua, although it was in a pleasant place. Joshua 6:26, 1 Kings 16:34. The curse is removed by the prophet's application of salt to the water. Do not look for a chemical reaction here, for this is another miracle, salt speaking of the purifying work of the Holy Spirit of God upon a people and a place. The water that had been unpleasant becomes pleasant and nourishing to animals and men. Elisha does not take any credit for the miracle, but certifies aloud to these people that the Lord has purified their water and lifted the curse from them. The Lord Jesus Himself will do great miracles between the old and new cities of Jericho. Matthew 20:29ff, Mark 10:46ff, Luke 18:35ff.

**Verses 23 – 25.** This last miracle is a dark one, and many have tried to avoid this passage, but pause and read it carefully, for there is great truth here, and it is not as it has been portrayed by some. The "little children" here are not toddlers, or those under an age when they understand what they are doing, for such are under the special protection of the Lord. Matthew 19:13ff.

Only those over the age of twenty were held responsible for their sin in the Exodus Generation, and the most serious juvenile delinquency and heretical abuse of God and God's man was required before any death penalty was imposed upon any juvenile offender who was under twenty years of age. Leviticus 24:10-22, Numbers 14:27-37, Deuteronomy 21:18-23. Read each of these three passages carefully and slowly. Notice that the punishment of death falls upon those under twenty only when their sin is blasphemy against God and a complete rejection of parental and all other authority.

God is not unfair, nor is the punishment unjust upon these young offenders here. Do not weep for these, nor for the juvenile offenders of today who die in active rebellion against all that is good and righteous. We make choices in this life, and some are fatal ones, and every person is responsible for their fatal choices, no matter how bad their upbringing.

These young blasphemous insulters of God's man are all under twenty, but not so young that they do not understand what they are doing. These are young people who have rejected God and God's man, and their abuse indicates the serious commitment to the pagan life style that they have made in their teenage rebellion. There are teenage rebels who later settle, but even today we see some who in their evil rejection of the rules of God, kill themselves and others by their recklessness and lack of respect for natural and divine laws. Such teenage delinquents apparently die under the judgement of God, for they have actively and deliberately placed themselves outside the protection that is otherwise upon the young. God is not mocked and grace protection lasts only for so long over those who insult their creator and protector. Let us work with youth to warn them against the satanic behaviours that will lead to their destruction.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Let us be challenged to stay close to the Lord, and keep close fellowship with all those who lead us to a deeper knowledge of the Lord. As Elisha drew closer to Elijah as the time of his departure neared, just so let us draw closer as we age to those who feed us the living Word of God.

2. Dramatic and unique things do occur at times. The events described in this chapter are unique. No other man has been delivered into heaven as Elijah was, and that underlines his identity as the greatest of the prophets, and the man whose job is not yet done. Elijah will yet return again, and will yet speak with his people Israel. Even today Jewish people set a place for Elijah at their Passover table. Let us proclaim prophetic truth more fully than we do so that when he returns to fulfil his ministry the Jewish people hear his words and repent. Zechariah 12:2 – 13:9. It is also a reminder to us that Miracles occur when and where they are needed, and that this is all a part of the plan of God. If our ministry requires the miraculous, then the miraculous will be provided. Let us focus on the path to walk and leave the miraculous in the Lord's hands. If miracles occur on our path let us rejoice, but always keep our eyes on the author of them, not be sidetracked or distracted by them.

3. Speculation about the nature of unique things, like the chariot of fire here, does not assist us. We must stop ourselves from time wasting side tracks in our Bible studies. Many good men and women have been rendered useless in their ministries because they became "prophecy nuts" rather than prophetic teachers. We cannot know finally the actual identity of a number of things in prophetic truth, for the final identity of many things will be known only at the time when their details are fulfilled. Let us study to understand what we can, and apply all we can, and trust the Lord to reveal all He needs to reveal at the times He needs to reveal the details.

4. There is judgement and there is grace. The evil juvenile blasphemers of the man of God were judged, and so are people even through to our own day when they go too far in their abuse of the plan and people of God. Let us preach the Gospel of Grace, but always warn people that the days of grace are running out as we speak and that judgement will certainly fall upon those who reject the Word and Work of God.

### **REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF THE PROPHET AND THE GIFT OF PROPHECY**

1. The gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet are distinguished in Scripture. In the Old Testament there were those who had the office of prophet, and served in an official capacity within the worship system of Israel but there were also those who at times were given the gift of prophecy to give a special prophecy even though they were not full time prophets. Elijah was a man with the office and the gift, where-as David had the gift at times but not the office.

2. The roles of the person with the office of prophet were many and varied:

(a) – Aaron was a preacher Exodus 7:1

(b) – In Nehemiah's time the prophet-preacher had a role to exegete the Word of God clearly so that the people would know the truth. Nehemiah 6:7, Hosea 6:5.

l – As revivalists they were to call people to repentance. Judges 6:7-12, Zechariah 7:7-12.

(d) – They were to oppose apostasy so that those who were likely to be misled by a false teacher would have no excuse. 1 Kings 18:36-39, 40, 2 Chronicles 25:15 Ezekiel 2:5, 2 Kings 20:11.

(e) – They were encouragers of the people. Ezra 5:2.

(f) – They were sometimes song/worship leaders for the people. 1 Samuel 10:5.

(g) – They led in prayer at worship. 2 Chronicles 32:20.

(h) – They were the advisers to the kings and they were associated with coronations. 1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Kings 11:28, 29, 2 Kings 9:1-6, 2 Chronicles 12:5, 2 Chronicles 12:6, 15:2-7.

(i) – They were spiritual advisers or seers for the kings; they "saw" the immediate future and so were able to advise the kings of the right decisions. 1 Samuel 9:9, 2 Samuel 24:11, 1 Chronicles 21:9, 24:29, 2 Chronicles 19:2, 33:18, 2 Kings 17:13, Isaiah 29:10,

(j) – They were fore-tellers of significant future events. 2 Samuel 7:5-16, Amos 9:11, Isaiah 9:6,7, Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34:22ff, Micah 5:2, Daniel 9:26, Zechariah 13:8, Joel, Zechariah 14, and many more.

(k) – God intended them to be the shepherds and vine-dressers of the nation. As such they were to be the type of Christ who is referred to in the Old Testament as "the great prophet". Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Zechariah 13:5,6, Matthew 21:11, Luke 7:16, 8:18-20, 24:19,23-26, John 7:40,41.

3. The Methodology of the prophets. There was no "set" formula for the prophets to follow, but certain things were established as "tests" for the people to be sure the prophet was genuine.

(a) – The prophet had to have a spiritual life witness that was like Moses. Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

(b) – God spoke to the prophets by dreams and visions. God spoke to Moses face to face but he was an exception. Numbers 12:6-7.

l – The prophet had to be totally confident of his message, as he was judged by God if there was any falsehood in it. 1Kings 22:13,14, 2 Kings 5:8.

(d) – There were to be no secret prophecies, everything was to be open and clear, so that all the people might be warned of God. Jeremiah 23:25-29.

(e) – The prophet had to be specific in his message and had to be obeyed literally. 2Ki 5:10-19 note especially verse 13.

4. There were always false prophets; in fact the great prophets of the Old Testament were always outnumbered by false prophets in their own day. Jeremiah 2:8, Ezekiel 13:1-23.

Our Lord warned us that there will always be false prophets about. Matthew 7:15-23.

Note The Lord's Words here in that the personal walk of the prophet is to be paid attention to:-

No spiritual fruit in their life = no truth in their words.

God allows the false prophets to operate without immediate judgement upon them, so that believers are always presented with an obedience test, to see whether we will obey the Scriptures or follow our own lusts to judgement.

False prophets will abound at times of poor Bible teaching. Weeds only grow in poorly cared for soil. Hosea 4:5,6, 9:7,8.

5. Tests that believers must apply when confronting a person claiming the gift of prophecy.
- (a) – The words of the prophet will never contradict the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:33-36, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1Cor 14:32.
  - (b) – The prophet will never call people away from genuine worship of God. Deuteronomy 13:1-5.
  - l – The prophet will always be specific and the prophecy will be able to be tested. Deut 18:20-22, Jeremiah 28:9.
  - (d) – Any prophet who asked for money was to be treated as false. Jeremiah 8:10.
  - (e) – Any prophet who was a drunkard was to be treated as false. Micah 2:11.
  - (f) – Any unconfessed sin of envy, jealousy, strife, etc in their life, they were false! Jeremiah 23:11.
  - (g) – If they were found only in groups they were probably false, as God's prophets were men alone. 1Ki 22:5-8, 18:22.
  - (h) – Does the prophecy accord with Scripture (this is more than just not contradict)? 1 Corinthians 14:37,38, 2Ki 23:2.

## **SIGNS**

1. A sign is something which stands for, or looks forward to something else.
  - a) Things such as- The Temple, Regalia, Stars and Uniforms.
  - b) Festivals such as the Jewish Feasts which spoke of the Plan of God.
  - c) Sacrifices such as Levitical Offerings which spoke of the work of Jesus Christ.
  - d) Customs such as Circumcision.
  - e) Names including the names of People and Places.
  - f) Supernatural Acts such as Miracles.
2. Signs were given by God to individuals as a proof of their authority. (Deuteronomy 13:1-4, Judges 6:17, Ezekiel 12:6,11, Hebrews 2:4)
3. Signs were for unbelieving Israel as a warning of coming judgement. (Isaiah 20:3, 28:11, Jeremiah 6:1, Ezekiel 4:3)
4. Signs for believers were for reminders of God's Grace (Exodus 13:9) such as the Covenant, (Exodus 31:13,17) and His Holiness. (Ezekiel 14:8)
5. The life of the Lord was a sign. (Matthew 12:38-42, Luke 2:34-35, John 6:30-35)
6. His death and resurrection were also signs. (Matthew 12:39, 24:30, John 2:18-22, 3:14-15)
7. The Apostles had temporary sign gifts to prove their authority from God. (Act 14:8-28, 1 Corinthians 1:22, Acts 19:11-12 cf. 1 Timothy 5:23, Philippians 2:25)
8. Asking for signs is not a sign of spirituality. (Matthew 12:38-39, John 6:30-35, 12:32-34)
9. Signs of the First Advent in Luke.
  - a) The virgin birth itself, in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy; the visitation of the angels both to Mary and Elizabeth, were all miraculous events. (Luke 1:26-38)
  - b) The attendant birth of John the Baptist is also described with its associated signs, and the recognition by the baby in the womb of Elizabeth was a sign of things to come. (Luke 1:5-25, 43-45 cf. Psalm 110:1)
  - c) Mary's prophecy of her son's role as Saviour and Sacrifice. (Luke 1:54-56)
  - d) The signs associated with John's birth. (Luke 1:65-66)
  - e) The prophetic song of Zachariah. (Luke 1:67-80)
  - f) The angelic visit to the shepherds. (Luke 2:10-11)
  - g) The song of Simeon. (Luke 2:25-35)
  - h) The song of Anna. (Luke 2:36-38)
  - i) The sign of the prophet Isaiah in the preaching of John the Baptist. (Luke 3:3-18)
10. Seven signs in John.
  - a) Wedding at Cana at Galilee. 2:1-11
  - b) Healing of the Nobleman's son. 4:46-54
  - c) The Cripple by the Pool of Siloam. 5:1-16
  - d) The feeding of the Five Thousand. 6:1-14
  - e) The healing of the Blind Man. 9:1-38
  - f) The raising of Lazarus. 11:1-46
  - g) The resurrection of the Lord. 20,21

**CHAPTER 3****INTRODUCTION**

We had been told before, 2 Kings 1:1, about the rebellion of Moab after Ahab's death and here we learn of further flow on effects of this rebellion, and the terrible aftermath for Moab. The next son of Ahab and Jezebel takes the throne, but he is a more cunning pagan than Ahaziah, or his father and mother, and re-establishes the worship of Jehovah under the image of the calf, as Jeroboam had. He abolishes the useless Baal statue of his father and replaces it with the equally useless statue of the golden calf. 1 Kings 12:26-33, Exodus 32:4-8.

He pretends to follow the God of Israel, but it is a compromised form of that worship, and so the morality of the land slips backwards still. By returning to the old ways of Aaron when he was in sin during Moses' absence, this king fails God, and his people. Compromised forms of paganism masquerading as genuine faith will always seduce people away from the truth of God's Word over time. In the great evil of child sacrifice we also see the depths that the Moabite paganism has plunged to.

**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.

**REFLECTIONS**

**Verses 1 – 3.** This king has the same name as the next one of Judah and so some confusion can occur. Most commentators use the shortened form of his name, Joram, to make the distinction between the two contemporaries. He will reign for twelve years in Samaria, and he had the benefit of the ministry of Elisha to draw upon had he wished to really restore spiritual life to his kingdom. He doesn't want to do this however, for that would mean allowing his people to return to the southern city of Jerusalem for the annual feasts, and politically he will not take that risk. By having the "State Cult" rather than genuine worship he keeps control.

This is a man who tries to hold onto power and influence while also having a form of religion that draws upon the truth, but keeps the truth also at a distance. I see in this calf worship a good picture of the liberal worship of too many churches today. They have lovely buildings, nice vestments for their priesthoods, but keep the Word of God contained and restricted in its application. They emphasize political and social agendas, but do not want spiritual life to really get hold of their churches and their people. They enjoy their religion for it makes little personal and spiritual demands of them and it is pleasant and has political significance in their nations. The danger in even genuine churches is still in this area. It is seen when church boards make decisions as to “goals” and direction for the church on the basis of human logic rather than asking what God is doing and simply going along that path.

Like the golden calf worship of old however the evils of liberalism and human directed religion always leads to immorality eventually. It is no accident that the liberal churches are the ones that encourage homosexuality and lesbianism, even to the point of having people practising these sexual activities as their ministers. The worship of the “golden calf” has not gone away from the world, for Satan delights in using the same ideas through history, and he doesn’t need to change much for each new generation because man’s weakness remains the same. Most want a religion they can get hold of and use for their own benefit, rather than have a genuine faith that gets hold of them and transforms their lives.

**Verses 4 – 9.** The rebellion of the king of Moab is a serious one, and with the previous battles against Ammon having gone badly in the end, due to Ahab’s stupidity, 1 Kings 20, there was danger from the north east still. The Ammonites may have been quiet at this point but the king of Israel had to move against Moab or he would have been seen as weak by others and so open to attack from all sides. He takes the action that he sees is required initially and calls for a muster of his levies from the tribes. Having completed a call up of all the tribal armies he decides what will be the best way to limit the dangers he will face in this expedition. He decides on an alliance with Judah, and they get Edomites to join them, so as to eliminate any problems from that quarter also. The decision as to the best route to take is made for strategic considerations, that a direct attack across the Jordan will be seen coming by the Moabites, and may open them to a flank attack by the Ammonites of the Gilead.

Moab’s strongest defences faced north, and so any attack along the “King’s Highway” from that direction would require long sieges to accomplish the defeat of the enemy. The kings are looking for easier victories and for the element of surprise. They pick the southern route, which is harder, with mountains to cross, but has the element of surprise in its favour. The southern route depended upon the rivulets of the southern desert flowing, so they could water the army and its baggage train. Unfortunately this particular year the rivers have dried up, and so after seven days of hard marching through the desert lands the sizeable army, and their baggage train of animals, start to face serious thirst, and the real possibility of death in the desert from lack of water. At this point they do what they should have done before; they camp and seek the Lord’s will in the matter.

**Verses 10 – 12.** Jehoram/Joram is very quick to think that Jehovah may be handing them all over to the Moabites for destruction. Pagans who are masquerading as believers understand their own hypocrisy and are quick to jump to conclusions of judgement, and that is one of the ways to spot such people. Jehoshaphat however does have faith in the Lord, and asks if there is a prophet of the Lord with the combined Army who they can consult and seek the Lord’s guidance and deliverance. It is amazing to reflect upon this, for the Lord was doing everything to bring the Israelite people back together, and he worked through the pagan part of the nation with a series of genuine prophets to try to get them to re-gather around the truth, even providing miracles to emphasize the centrality and stability of the truth if only they would both embrace it.

The king of Judah immediately recognises that the word of the Lord is with Elisha and so the two kings head down to the camp to meet with Elisha. It is of note that they do not send for him in their kingly role, but humble themselves, and go down into the common camp and see the prophet at his tent amongst the soldiers of the armies. The king of Edom is not mentioned, for he is a pagan, and his camp is likely at some distance from the Israelites. They had nearly wiped his people out a generation or so before and the three armies would have been united in word only. It had taken the Edomites many years to rebuild even a little strength after the massacre in the last days of David. 1 Kings 11:14-22, 22:47.

**Verses 13 – 14.** When Elisha sees the king of Israel he doesn’t greet him as the religious reformer that he may have appeared to be to others. Elisha greets him harshly and invites him to go to the false prophets of his father and mother and seek counsel from them. This tells me that this son of Ahab, while removing the Baal idols, has kept the same allegiance to paganism as his parents had. Joram is still concerned that all the three kings and their armies will be destroyed by the Moabites, and pleads for an answer on the basis that it isn’t just for him but for the others. By doing this, rather than giving any spiritual defence of his own faith, I take as evidence that he is indeed a pagan at heart.

This was his opportunity to repent publicly and restore the worship of the army of the northern kingdom to the truth. This was the time to call all armies to a solemn prayer meeting, but neither king does this. Elisha makes it clear to the two men that it is the presence of the king of Judah that alone will guarantee the answer they are to receive from the Lord of hosts. Elisha has absolute confidence in the Lord, that he will answer, and that he will deliver the armies, but it is the remnant of faithful believers who will bring them all through.

**Verses 15 – 17.** The prophet does a strange thing at this point; he requests a minstrel to play and sing to him before he speaks. The kings order a minstrel to come forward and he plays and sings, possibly from the Psalms of David. Do not wander off the track at this point and start to speak of the calming effect of music upon troubled souls, for

this man Elisha has been through great events, and seen the mighty work of God. He doesn't need soothing music to calm his spirit like the mentally troubled Saul did. 1 Samuel 16:16-23. The minstrel is likely singing Psalms of David about the deliverance of the Lord, and it is from the doctrinal truths that the prophet draws strength after the hard marching and physical thirst of the last days. Psalms 6, 7, 22, 25, 31, 41, 50, 59, 69, 71 are just a few Psalms that may have been sung, and upon the truth of which the prophet rested his soul and spirit as he sought the Lord's face and word for the time.

As he rests upon the truths of the sung Word of God the Holy Spirit comes upon Elisha and he sees in the form of a vision what the Army is to do. He orders the kings to dig a series of ditches in the Valley they are camping in. They are to fill the dry valley with ditches that will perform the duty of drinking troughs, and the promise of God is given that even though there is no sound of wind or rain, the entire valley will flow with water and the water will fill every ditch they dig, and all will be able to drink; men and animals. The army must express their faith in the words of the prophet and under a clear blue sky, weak with thirst, and with no sign of rain, they must dig ditches to act as water troughs for the water that will come into them. If they dig shallow ditches they will receive little water, and if they dig deep ditches they will have much water. According to their faith the ditches will fill with water.

I am reminded of a great miracle that the Lord sent through the prayer of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. On a journey to China his sailing ship was attacked by pirates when it lay helpless and becalmed. Taylor would not pray for deliverance until the ship's captain had put up every piece of sail he had, even though no wind blew. Only when every sail was set did Taylor bow before the Lord and pray for wind, and it came at exactly the right time, and strongly enough to save them from certain death. Faith must be expressed in action, and we will receive in proportion to our expectations! Matthew 7:7-11, Luke 11:9-13, John 14:13-14, 16:24, Hebrews 10:19-22, James 2:14-26, 4:1-3, 1 John 5:14-16.

**Verses 18 – 20.** The delay in answering the prayer of the prophet was not a hindrance to the faith of the kings or the people, and the next morning they offered up the sacrifices that the Mosaic Law demanded. At the time of the morning sacrifices a sudden stream of water flowed through the valley and filled all the ditches to the brim with fresh water. In this land you can get flash floods, where water flows without warning along dry river beds. These floods can catch out the unwary, and people are drowned who have foolishly camped in one of these dry river beds/valleys. The great valley the army is camped in becomes a place where one of these sudden rivers of water flows, and the people and animals are watered and ready for the battles to come.

As the ditches fill with water the word of the Lord comes to the prophet again. The treachery and paganism of the Moabites is to be punished according to the word that now comes from the Lord through Elisha. Having been certified as a true prophet by this miracle of deliverance he can now give the orders as to how the battle is to be fought against Moab. The campaign is to be one of extermination of the Moabites and the total destruction of the fertility of their land. Every city is to be destroyed, every well stopped up, every good tree cut down, and every fertile field ruined by the scattering of rocks upon it. The army is to bury all good land under rocks.

**Verses 21 – 27.** The Moabites now hear of the arrival of the combined army around this time and they gather all their fighting strength and march to the border. The Israelites and their Edomite allies are still camped in the valley with the water in the trenches there. As the sun rises the red earth makes the water look like blood and the Moabites all jump to the conclusion that the three kings have fallen out with each other and killed each other in the night. They think that the camp is in chaos and so they can surge in to take spoil from the Israelites. The nature of the trenches means that they are forced to attack in a manner that makes it easier for them to be slain by the defenders. The trenches are not only good water troughs but also excellent tools to force their enemies into the killing zone they create. The enemy forces of Moab are massacred.

The Moabite survivors flee and are pursued to their towns which fall one by one. Their last great citadel is besieged and their king in desperation organises a sally out with 700 warriors. He picks what he thinks will be the weak point where the Edomites are stationed, but they fight him back to the walls. In desperation he offers his own son as a burnt offering to his pagan god Chemosh upon the walls of the city in full view of the Israelite and Edomite armies.

This great evil is a visual reminder as to why this nation is under a curse of God. There was great shock amongst all the armies at this pagan act of the king of Moab, but it had an effect of sorts, for the armies of Israel left off the siege without conquering Moab and destroying it as the Lord had ordered them to do. The chapter ends with the inadequate obedience of the Israelites to the revealed will of the Lord regarding the pagan Moabites.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Enemies will always rise up against God's people and God's work at times. The enemy is busy and so are his people. We are not to get upset at this reality, but go to prayer well before we go to our strategy table and start planning what to do. Prayer must precede all preparation for only then will we achieve what the Lord wants from each situation we face.
2. Bluntly telling people the truth is required of all prophets and preachers. We are not to play with the truth and play at politics, but we are to bluntly proclaim the truth. We are never to be shocked at the extent of the evils Satan will drive people to, for nothing is beyond the imagination that Satan will entice those to do who have sold themselves out to

him. Focus only upon the Gospel message and the truth of the victory of the Lord and keep moving forward on God's path for you and turn away from those who will die in their evils rather than face the truth.

3. It is always the remnant who delivers God's people from disaster. Do not be concerned if you are outnumbered by the enemy forces, for the Lord has always worked with a few rather than the majority. Focus upon the Lord's work for you to do and do it; do not be distracted by anything else believer!

4. Let us pray with expectancy to the Lord of abundance. The dying words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon are worth quoting, "Believe more, pray more, and so receive more". Let us do what the Lord urges us to do, and pray, prepare for blessing and open our hearts and wallets for the work of the Lord.

### **REFLECTION UPON FINDING DIVINE GUIDANCE – THE WILL OF GOD**

1. There are three categories of will in history

- a) Divine will (sovereignty)
- b) Angelic will.
- c) Human will.

2. Main areas of the will of God (1 John 3:23)

- a) For the unbeliever – salvation (2 Peter 3:9)
- b) For the believer – spirituality (Ephesians 5:18)

3. Christ has free will (Matthew 26:42, Hebrews 10:7, 9)

- a) No free will in mankind would imply no free will in Christ.
- b) The basic principles of divine guidance however is based on the fact that man possesses free will to choose for or against God.

4. Type of will of God as related to the human race (e.g. Balaam)

- a) Directive (Numbers 22:12) – what God directs.
- b) Permissive (Numbers 22:20) – What God allows
- c) Overruling (Numbers 23) – When God overrules

5. Principles of Guidance

- a) Knowledge of biblical principles in the believer (Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:1-6, Isaiah 58:11, Romans 12:2)
- b) Surrender and filling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:17-18, 1 John 1:9)
- c) Growth – to eat meat and not rely on milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

6. Categories of the will of God

- a) Viewpoint will of God – What does He want me to think?
- b) Operational will of God – What does He want me to do?
- c) Geographical will of God – Where does He want me to be?

7. An example of the will of God (Acts 11) – the Guidance of Peter

- a) Guidance through prayer (vs 5)
- b) Guidance through the mind (vs 6)
- c) Guidance through the word (vs 7-10)
- d) Guidance through providential circumstances (vs 11)
- e) Guidance through the filling of the Spirit (vs 12)
- f) Guidance through fellowship and comparison of data (vs 13-15)
- g) Guidance through remembering Scripture (vs 16)

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 4****INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter and those following we have a series of miracles done by Elisha that underline his status as a prophet of the Lord certified by the presence of the miraculous. They are not necessarily in chronological order, but all are included from the life of the prophet, to make some specific points about God's dealing with his sinful people Israel. Each and every one of these miracles also teaches us some aspect of the Character of God as it relates to the care of the believer.

As has been noted before, when miracles occur in any ministry it is normally a sign that great things will later be required of the one who receives them. Miracles have been recorded as occurring at all times in history. The ones recorded in scripture certainly cluster around certain specific time periods and serve very specific purposes, but remember these are the only ones recorded in the Bible; many have not been specifically listed. John 20:30, 21:35.

Many miracles have been recorded outside the scriptural record occurring in mission situations throughout history. Many of these are well verified by numerous eye witnesses, and testified to by following events in each situation. From one New Zealand missionary, Haydon Mellsop, who served in the China Inland Mission (Now OMF) in the 1920s and 1930s, I heard of three very specific miraculous events that he was involved in during his time in China.

In the two cases that occurred as a result of prayer, he and others were physically delivered in situations where they should have died. The first was a deliverance from in front of a firing squad of Japanese soldiers, and the second was literally the miracle of Elijah and the widow, 1 Kings 17, for when over one hundred people were trapped by the Japanese Army in a mission compound, the Lord miraculously ensured their single rice barrel never ran out through all the time they were kept there.

The third case was a miracle of levitation worked by a circle of Buddhist monks, and it was very real, with no tricks involved, and it sent a shiver down the spine of the missionaries who observed it. As Haydon said to me as he told the story, this miracle came from the satanic powers these monks had access to. The enemy has power to work "lying wonders", Matthew 24:23-28, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, and he takes that opportunity at times.

Haydon was not a Pentecostal who spoke of the miraculous casually and often, but a thoughtful Baptist, who did not initially believe these things occurred in our present Church Age, but saw the hand of God, and the finger of the enemy work in ways that were way beyond any man's explanations. His stories were by no means rare from seriously dangerous mission situations, and I have personally heard of a limited number of miracles from reputable sources, which were all verified, as real instances of God's sovereign deliverance in situations of grave danger. I have also heard many weird and strange stories of "miracles" which evaporate when tested by logical inquiry.

Miracles are rare phenomena, and are not to be looked for on a daily basis. They are simply not needed in the plan of God that often. When there is a divine purpose however they certainly occur; the most common being miracles of deliverance from danger, death, or disease. Miracles like we will read of in this chapter will occur at times today, and in the future, just as they have in the past, whenever the plan of God calls for them. We are in the Lord's hands regarding these things and are to be relaxed with their presence or their absence.

Haydon never let the great miracles he had experienced distract him from his purpose in giving the Gospel, and he never majored on speaking of these things, he spoke always of Christ, Christ crucified, risen again, and soon to return for His people. Let this be our testimony in the presence of the miraculous. Let us not be distracted by them, or surprised when they occur in the Plan of God. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Hebrews 12:1-8.

**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 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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 7.** God cares for the details of our daily lives, and he notes the challenges we face as we set out daily to serve him along the path through this life that he has called us to walk. This widow of one of the prophets/preachers of the day has been left with a major financial concern. This woman's husband was known to Elisha and is referred to as his servant, indicating that he served the Lord and he followed the example and doctrine of Elisha. He has borrowed money at some point and dies in debt to the creditor from whom he had taken the loan.

This is a story that is not unusual in our own day. As the bread winner of the home becomes unable to work through a terminal illness they borrow money to ensure that the family is cared for with necessities through their dying time, and after their death the day of financial reckoning comes. It is not wrong to borrow money for legitimate purposes, and although it is best never to owe money, there will be times when it is necessary on the path you are called to walk through life. This widow is not abused by the prophet for owing money, nor is her husband's death a judgement for the borrowing of the money.

The rules regarding borrowing and lending were laid down in the Mosaic Law. Money was not to be borrowed from pagan nations or people, for they would charge interest that could bankrupt the individual and so alienate the land that would then be seized in payment for the loan. Exodus 22:22-27, Leviticus 25:25ff, Deuteronomy 15:1-15. Read these passages now, as they identify the rights and wrongs in the Lord's eyes in this case. Firstly the creditor is entitled to sell the family as servants for up to seven years to pay back the debt, at which point they will receive back their property and their freedom.

This provision of indentured service ensured that a loan was repaid always and that the land of each family was never lost in "mortgage sale". The creditor is entitled to enforce the Law and reclaim his loan, but he is also under the Lord's

grace provisions and is not to abuse a widow and her children, or he will come under the special judgement of God. This woman is in a bind, for the debt is legitimate, but it is not too great (as we will see it is paid off with a quantity of olive oil), and so forced service for her children is an excessive requirement by the creditor. Leviticus 25:39-44, Matthew 18:23-35. There is some injustice and some harshness here, and she takes it to the prophet for solution. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

Remember, Elisha makes no moral judgement upon the woman or her dead husband, so we cannot deduce that they were in any way wrong in their taking of this loan. Having taken a loan however the believer is personally responsible to repay that loan, and the prophet will not supernaturally deliver them from their financial responsibility, but he will provide a way to meet it. This is a reminder to us all that the Lord requires of us financial responsibility, and while prayers to be "bailed out" of a bad financial decision may still be answered, (as it is here) we will be required to be active in the process, and work as part of the solution. It is wrong not to repay a legitimate debt. Psalms 37:21-24, Proverbs 22:7-8.

This woman has a solution provided by the prophet. It is supernatural, but it requires her faith and her work. James 2:14-26. She must believe the prophets words and borrow every container, large and small, her neighbours will lend her, and then she must pour out the oil into the borrowed containers. She must then sell the oil (not the containers also) door to door, and collect the money, and pay the creditor in full. When all is done she must return all the borrowed containers back to her neighbours.

She and her two boys are very busy, possibly over a number of days, in this work, but as they are obedient there is enough sold oil to pay the loan back, and there is abundance beyond that. God always gives us more grace than we would ever need. It appears from the text that once she started to pour oil into the borrowed containers the oil literally poured out of her original container and kept pouring in a continuous stream until every borrowed container was filled to the brim, when it stopped.

It appears also from verse 7 that there was enough oil sold to ensure that the widow was able to live on the proceeds, above and beyond the debt repayment, for some considerable time. This would indicate three things. Firstly it tells us that the demand for servitude by the creditor was harsh and excessive, as the debt was easily paid off with a quantity of oil. Secondly it gives us a clue that the boys were young and the widow needed provision to care for them, and was unable to work herself to support them at this time. Thirdly we have another glimpse of the grace of God, which meets our needs and goes well beyond them. All the Lord requires of us is our obedience to His revealed Word.

**Verses 8 – 13.** On another day, and at another unspecified time, Elisha is travelling in the Shunem area. Like all the prophets from the days of Samuel, Elisha has a travelling ministry, preaching and teaching at the various schools of the prophets and conducting sacrifices and services where ever the need arose. He is the revival preacher of his day in the north and this means being active in his opposition to the Baal and Golden Calf worship that was destroying the heart of the nation.

A wealthy woman in the area of Shunem has seen him come and go and noticed that he doesn't appear to have anywhere permanent to stay while he is in the area. She is referred to as "great", or wealthy, and remember this is always a relative term. A person is "wealthy" in a slum area if they have a home to live in, clothes to wear for all occasions, and food to eat regularly. It is this category that we see here. This is a poor area, and this woman has a large home for her neighbourhood, although it is not a palace. She is ready to provide what she can for the prophet. Her husband is mentioned although clearly does not play any significant part in her life. We will later find that he is old, and he has little time for spiritual things, although he does not stand in her way in assisting the prophet.

She initially supports the prophet in his ministry by providing food for him and his servant Gehazi, and she regularly does this over some time in her home. She then sees that she has the resources to build a room on the top of her house for the prophet to stay in while he is in their area, and sets aside the money for this project, secures her husband's support, and approaches the prophet. The room is built and furnished with all the prophet needs for his periodic stays, and the next time he passes by he stays there. He then asks his servant Gehazi to ask the woman whether there is anything he can do for her to in any way repay her kindness, but as she is a well respected member of the local community, there is nothing he can do for her.

Elisha is very careful in his relationship with this benefactor, for as a man receiving support from a woman he needs to be very careful, lest anyone accuse him or her of sexual sin. He enquires through his servant to keep the entire process formal and respectable. The upper chamber the woman has built is on the roof of her house, and may not even open into the house at any point, but have its own entry stairs going up either the outside wall of the house, or an inner wall from the public courtyard area. This would mean that there was no way the prophet could intrude in the family life of the people in the house, and no accusation could be cast that he was ever in the private sleeping quarters of the family.

This avoidance of even the appearance of evil is a crucial example for all servants of the Lord to follow. 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Timothy 3:2-7. No pastor is ever to come between a woman and her husband, nor act in any way that would bring suspicion upon her or himself. Marriage is to be honoured and supported. In mission situations this is of great importance, and a visiting preacher should only stay in places where there is no possibility of any story beginning about immorality. We are to be more careful over this matter than many are today, for the Lord's work is brought into disrepute by rumour as well as by reality.

**Verses 14 – 20.** Like many marriages where there is a great age difference the couples may not be very close, as they have different interests and life goals. This woman apparently sees little of her husband and their sexual life has

not been regular enough for her to become pregnant at any time. She desires a child, but has had none. The prophet's servant Gehazi spots in her behaviours that she would clearly love to have a child of her own and reports this to Elisha. The prophet receives a revelation of the Lord and reports it to the woman; that she is to have a child of her own around this time the following year. She doesn't believe the announcement, because it is too wonderful to believe, but she conceives a child to her old husband a few months later and gives birth to a son that next year.

Years pass and the story continues in the text, with the boy now grown up (around 8-12 years), and joining his father at the time of reaping in the fields. Through this time Elisha has been visiting regularly and staying with them in his prophet's chamber. One particular reaping season the young boy is out in the fields early one day helping his father, when he suddenly cried aloud that he has massive and unusual headaches. He then collapsed. The father called one of his farm hands, and got them to carry the boy back to his mother, where around noon he stops breathing, and as far as she is concerned has died in her arms. The child of promise lies lifeless in her arms, and the mother is distraught, but her faith is still strong, for she knows this boy was born of the Word of God, and so she believes that the words and miraculous power of the man of God may assist him even now.

**Verses 21 – 24.** She is very deliberate in her actions now, and they are focused upon her faith that the prophet can bring this boy back to her, even from the dead, just as Elijah brought the widow of Zarephath's boy back from the dead. 1 Kings 17:17-24. The power of Elijah and Elisha are well known and I believe it is this story of Elijah and the widow's son that drives this woman to ride all the way to the prophet's present location several miles away from her farm.

She does not tell her husband what has happened and he doesn't ask about the boy. His response to her desire to ride to see the prophet is casual, indicating he has little time for religion himself. Her faith is strong, and she knows his is weak and so does not trouble him with the truth behind her urgency. There are times to share spiritual truths with people close to us and there are times when sharing the truth will simply distract the purposes of God. Had she told her husband that she was riding to get the prophet to raise their son from the dead then all chaos would have broken out in the fields and the home, and she would have been unable to do anything at all except mourn with the others of the household. She knows her husband has no spiritual discernment and so she acts secretly and quickly.

**Verses 25 – 27.** She secures a good riding ass and with a male servant in tow to act as her guard and assistant she urges the asses onwards, and tells the servant to ride as fast as he is able without killing the animals. A woman riding alone in this day would have been attacked; these are violent times!

She rode fast to Mt Carmel and found the prophet, but he had been looking down the road, and had seen her coming and felt something was wrong well before she arrived. While she is still a long way off he sends Gehazi to ask if all is well. She lies to Gehazi, saying all is well, and waits until she gets to the feet of the prophet and then falls at his feet and grasps his feet, but is now so overcome with emotion that she cannot say anything. To grasp the feet was an action of a wife or lover only. To grasp the feet of a man was either to plead for life when threatened with death, or to ask to be taken by him as wife.

They are in public view, and such an intimate action could lead to all sorts of rumours starting about the prophet, and so Gehazi thrusts her away roughly. Such an action by her is so out of character that Elisha is baffled, and he knows that something is not right, but that the Lord has not shown him anything to this point. He can however see that this woman is beside herself with grief, fear, anxiety and a mixture of other emotions that have not bubbled to the surface. It is common with the level of trauma she has experienced for people to hold themselves together for a time, but then to really "lose it" and become quite incoherent. Elisha can see that she has mentally unravelled under some great burden.

**Verses 28 – 31.** The woman's words in verse 28 have been taken by some to indicate that this child is indeed Elisha's child by this woman, but that is not the meaning of her words. She is beside herself with the mixed emotions of grief and worry, and having got this boy as an answer to prayer, she is desperate to believe that the Lord will not allow him to be taken away from her now. Gehazi is younger and fitter than Elisha and can move faster, and so as soon as the prophet hears of the boy's death, he sends Gehazi to run to the house and lay the prophet's staff over the boy's face that he might recover by the touch of the staff.

Clearly Elisha believed the staff that divided the Jordan River had properties that would bring healing power to bear upon the boy, but it is not the case. 2 Kings 2:8,14. Why does he do this? There is no explanation other than that above, that in some way the prophet believed that staff carried his authority and the Spirit's power was within it, and that as the Lord had revealed the boy's birth to him, so the Lord would grant a healing touch through his staff. This is not God's plan in this case, and the boy remains in a coma or dead, until the prophet arrives at the house some minutes after Gehazi's failure in the use of the staff.

**Verses 32 – 35.** Elisha arrives, and the boy has been, to all intents and purposes, dead for a number of hours now, laid out on the prophet's bed in the upstairs room. The body is quite cold at this point; a sign of either deep comatose state, or death. Elisha now enters the room and lies on top of the boy bringing warmth to the boy's apparently life-less body. Does he do mouth to mouth resuscitation on the boy? Is the boy in a coma from which the prophet's weight upon him and breathing into his mouth revives him? We do not have enough information, but clearly a real and powerful miraculous recovery occurs, but it may be resuscitation rather than resurrection here, as in the case of Lazarus. John 11. While I say this, I suspect he was dead indeed, as the symptoms indicate a brain tumour or aneurism, but the condition after recovery is fragile for some time.

In this day the dead were buried before sunset, or at dawn the next day, and even if this was a coma it would have led to actual and really terrible death by being buried alive had the prophet not lifted the boy up to consciousness again. The boy would have been buried as dead that night had the prophet not intervened. Elisha is doing something to bring warmth back to the boy and breath to his body, for he is exhausted by his efforts and has to walk about the house at times, taking breaks in his stretching over the boy's lifeless body. Finally the boy sneezes seven times and then opens his eyes. He has recovered consciousness and is quickly reunited with his loving mother.

**Verses 36 – 37.** The Prophet calls Gehazi to get the boy's mother and he does so quickly. She has been waiting down stairs. The boy is still not 100% well, and the woman is told to come in and take up the boy into her arms, and by her loving care complete the work the prophet has begun. This is another indication to me that this was a miraculous resuscitation from a deathly coma, and that it will be some time before the boy is fully recovered from whatever caused the seizure and comatose state.

It is a case in strong contrast to the raising of Lazarus, and even the recovery of Paul after being stoned to death at Lystra, and the raising of Eutychus after his fatal and bone crushing fall. Acts 14:19-21, 20:8-12. Biblical resurrection leads to complete health being restored immediately without the requirement for recovery over time. Either way, resuscitation or resurrection, there is a great miracle here worked by the Lord over time through the faith and work of the woman and the prophet Elisha. The woman falls at the prophet's feet in gratitude and worship, and takes the boy in her arms and heads down stairs to complete his care and recovery. Elisha moves on with his ministry.

**Verses 38 – 41.** The next miracle occurs at another time in the prophet's life when he is at Gilgal with the theological students at a time of famine. Elisha tells Gehazi to set up a large pot to cook cereal and other foods into a stew of sorts for the men to all eat. The prophets are all sent out to find what they can growing wild in the fields and wild places. The men gather all sorts of things that look like food, but are not edible, taste bitter, and in some cases may even be mildly poisonous. The prophet orders all the "foods" brought in prepared and added to the pot. There is famine in the land and this is all there is in the local area around Gilgal.

In times of great famine and war men have eaten grass and other inedible or bitter herbs to maintain their life. My own uncle (World War 2), and great uncle (World War 1), who were prisoners of war, ate grasses that they later discovered were supposed to be inedible, but they lived and they both believed they survived because of the vitamins and minerals their bodies were able to get from those grasses. The inedible stew is produced and poured out for the men gathered there. As the men eat the food they all cry out in disgust at the food, "there is poison in the pot". They all fear they will die of the effects of the food in that pot. Elisha orders that some grain be added to the pot and it is cooked up again and this time the food tastes good and is nourishing.

**Verses 42 – 44.** This miracle here is one that later the Lord will duplicate twice, but on a far greater scale in the feeding of the 4000 and the 5000. Matthew 14:16-21, 15:32-38, John 6:11-12. A man arrives from a neighbouring area with a first fruits offering for the prophet. It is a ceremonial offering of 20 small barley loaves (the same sort that Jesus will use 800 years later) and some corn stalks with a few husks of corn in each. It is a gift, but certainly not enough to feed the 100 men that the prophet has with him. The servants report this "fact" to Elisha, and he bluntly tells them that the Lord God will change the "facts" here and that this food will feed all and there will be some left over. The servants divide up the bread and it feeds all the men present, and all have enough to eat.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Each and every miracle occurs here in a context of the testing of faith. The believers are all challenged to believe in the power and provision of God and act as if the Lord is going to do something amazing. They are all obedient and their hearts desire is met each time. God's challenge remains the same to us all today as in past ages. We are to hear the Word, understand the Word, believe the Word, and apply the Word into the fabric of our daily lives. The power of God will then transform us and our circumstances, with or without the miraculous. We are not to seek miracles, but to expect the God of miracles to provide them any time they are needed to fulfil the plan. Our focus is upon our obedience to the Plan of God.

2. Faith and works go together. In each and every situation in this chapter the believers must apply their faith in action, and by their faith-filled and motivated work they achieve what the Lord desires for them. They use what they have and the Lord transforms their little into great work for His glory. The woman of Shunem provides what she has for the prophet, and so she is provided for, and even though tested, her faith holds up under pressure. Bad things do happen to good people, but God's people are encouraged to cast their cares upon the Lord and so find His path through the test. Let us focus upon what the Lord is doing in each and every situation we face on our journey through this life.

3. God always gives more grace than we ever need. There is no formula to the Lord's work for us. Elisha is blessed abundantly but often not by the means he expects. His foresight fails him at times, and his staff, which divided a river, is not used to bring health to a sick or dead boy. He doesn't lose faith, or get distressed by these challenges; he prays, relaxes, and then works as the Lord directs in different ways to get the Lord's solution. Let us be flexible in our thinking and our working for the Lord, and let us be prepared to work to the point of exhaustion in the work without feeling hard done by.

**GOD CARES FOR YOU**

1. God knows ...
  - a) Our sorrows. (Exodus 3:7)
  - b) Our devotions. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
  - c) Our thoughts. (Psalm 44:21)
  - d) Our foolishness. (Psalm 69:5)
  - e) Our frailties. (Psalm 103:14)
  - f) Our deeds. (Psalm 139:2)
  - g) Our words. (Psalm 139:4)
  - h) The composition of the universe. (Psalm 147:4)
  - i) All things. (Proverbs 15:3)
  - j) Our needs. (Matthew 6:32)
  - k) About animal creation. (Matthew 10:29)
  - l) Mankind. (Matthew 10:30)
  - m) What might or could have been. (Matthew 11:23)
  - n) His own. (John 10:14)
  - o) Past, present and future. (Acts 15:18)
  
2. God is able to ...
  - a) Save forever those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – Hebrews 7:25
  - b) Supply every need – 2 Corinthians 9:8
  - c) Deliver all who are tempted – Hebrews 2:18
  - d) Sustain the weak believer and make him stand – Romans 14:4
  - e) Keep us from falling and make us blameless – Jude 24,25
  - f) Surpass all that we could ask or think – Ephesians 3:20
  - g) Raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son – Hebrews 11:19
  
3. With God, all things are possible – Matthew 19:26
  
4. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not able to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
  
5. God's character is stable.
  - a) If God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
  - b) No matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)
  
6. God's promises are secure for He is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)
  
7. God's power is always the same:-
  - a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
  - b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)
  - c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)
  
8. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)
  
9. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)
  
10. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)

**NOTES**

**CHAPTER 5****INTRODUCTION**

Leprosy was the scourge of the ancient world. The disease referred to in the Bible as “leprosy” covered a number of infectious and non-infectious skin conditions. Occasionally these conditions would spontaneously remit and the person would be healed, but this was rare. To have leprosy in Israel was to become a social outcast as soon as the disease was discovered by others, such as the fear and loathing created by this family of diseases. At this point refer to the Commentary on Leviticus chapters 13 – 14, and read there the Mosaic Law rules for the diagnosis of the disease and the sacrifices to be offered when it was cured by any means.

Leprosy was a perfect picture of the impact of sin upon mankind. It began as a small blemish on the skin but spread steadily and rotted the flesh as it went, deadening the nerves in the affected areas so that the sufferer was unable to feel any pain in the affected limb. Finally it led to death, unless a miracle of divine deliverance intervened. In the case of Naaman before us, the general of the army of the Syrian enemy, is afflicted by this terrible disease, but he is, through this experience to become a believer in the God of Israel. This chapter also speaks of the faith of a little slave girl, captured in war against Israel, who expresses her faith in the Lord and her master is delivered then by his own faith-obedience.

Once again the writer’s message is that of James one thousand years later; that faith without works that express that faith, has no power to change things, and faith that does not work out in the life of the person, has not changed them and is not real biblical faith! James 2:14-26. There is challenge to faith for the little slave girl, captured in battle, and separated from her family, never to see them again, and she rises to this challenge, and considers the pain of her master ahead of her own slavery.

There is challenge to Naaman to believe the prophet and do what he asks, even though it makes no sense to him. There is the challenge to faith for his servants who speak up and encourage their master to be obedient to the words of the prophet. There is then the challenge to Gehazi, which he sadly fails to meet through lust for money, and becomes a leper as Naaman had been. The themes here are faith, obedience, and judgement for those who fall short of the holy standards of God. These are all leadership themes and all leaders need to understand and apply these things.

**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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 2.** This great general, who has led the Syrian Army to victory over Israel and everyone else is afflicted with leprosy. In this day that would normally mean total separation from all other people, but the case is restricted enough on his body (verse 11 tells us that it is restricted to only one place on his body at this point) for him to be able to continue to serve his king and live at home with his family. As it progresses however he will be required to live apart from society even within Syria. Remember the Leviticus passages, for had this man been in Israel, then he would have been isolated immediately. His days of fame and fortune are numbered, and time for this man to live in a palace is running out by the day.

A man's real character is known by the attitudes towards him of his friends and his enemies, and on this basis we will see that this man Naaman is a great and noble man. He is also a ruthless commander of the Syrian Army and has coordinated raiding parties into northern Israel and the East Bank, and in those raiding parties he has captured war slaves. One of those captives is a young girl, possibly between 8 and 12 years. The term used for her is pre-puberty, so possibly around age ten years.

**Verses 3 – 5.** This little girl has been brutally separated from her family of origin and possibly seen them killed, or knows they are slaves else-where but that she will most likely never see them again. Her mistress is the wife of Naaman, and she is well treated in this palace by her mistress and has a good life with them, but it is as a slave. In such a situation would you expect the slave to be concerned about their mistress and master, especially when her master is the General of the Army that destroyed her old home, village, neighbours, and family?

We now refer to what is called "Stockholm Syndrome" to describe the identification of a captive with their captor, but much more than this is required here to explain the slave girl's words and actions. She genuinely loves her new family, cares for her master's welfare, and even though a slave, has clearly been treated well by them. Good people have been brought together by the Lord here in strange circumstances.

Even though young at the time of her capture she has heard stories of Elijah and Elisha and knows of their miracle working abilities through the power of the God of Israel. She has kept her faith in God, although experiencing great trauma in the destruction of her home town and the death or capture of all its inhabitants. She has learned to love her enemies, and she seeks God's will for herself and for them. This ten year old teaches us a great deal about how the Lord can use the very young to teach the very old! It also reminds us that there are no man-made age barriers to spiritual maturity. Proverbs 24:17, 25:21. Let us use this girl's life as a challenge to our youth groups, for this is the standard of spiritual maturity we ought to expect in the Holy Spirit – not playing fair in games and sports events.

God alone heals leprosy directly at this time and all the people of the day understood this, so what is about to happen will create initially great fear for the king of Israel. Spontaneous remission of this disease was inexplicable to the ancients, although we today understand that leprosy is a disease that is easily eradicated with optimal nutrition and good personal cleanliness/hygiene practises. It may be that Naaman has contracted this disease while on campaigns, when he was not living in sanitary conditions and not eating enough fresh fruit and vegetables to keep up his Immune System.

To be asked to heal leprosy at this time however was an impossible request for any king humanly speaking, (although in various cultures and at various times kings have been expected to heal as the earthly rulers of God's people). The English kings of the Middle Ages were expected to have what was known as "the King's Touch", and some were able to heal skin diseases. The tomb of the greatest of the old Anglo-Saxon kings, Edward the Confessor, at Westminster Abbey, was a place of pilgrimage where the sick were left overnight to seek healing from the Lord. I mention these things to identify that it was not unknown for a king to be asked to heal another.

Naaman's reputation and the great esteem in which he is held will be seen by two further interventions on his behalf in this chapter. Firstly his king values him and feels deeply his pain at the disease he has contracted on the king's service. He seeks any way he can to assist, and when he hears of Elisha he writes to the king of Israel a letter of introduction for Naaman and seeks the king of Israel's support to heal his general. This is a truly bizarre situation for the king of Israel, when the enemy's best general, who has just finished devastating your lands, comes to you and seeks healing for an incurable disease. It is a testimony to the blood thirsty, ruthless, and yet casual attitude to raiding between kingdoms also.

In today's western world it would be many decades for people to forgive their cruel enemies and work with them freely with trust after they have been enslaving their people, yet here Naaman can approach the enemy's king and request assistance within a few years of leading raids into their territory! Raiding was almost like a sport in the ancient world, and all did it when they thought they could get away with it and so there is acceptance of shifting alliances between apparently sworn enemies far more than in our day.

Naaman comes with significant gifts of several million dollars value, and this is the testimony of friendship/peace, and may approach the value of moneys taken on the raids he recently led into Israel. Ten changes of clothing were ten complete sets of kingly garments, each of which would be worth \$100,000-00+ in our day.

**Verses 6 – 8.** The king of Syria's letter is a blunt, short, and straight forward one. "This is my servant Naaman, and I have sent him in order that you might heal him of his leprosy". To the king of Israel it is a letter that indicates the Syrians are looking for the opportunity to declare war on them. Now this is, in light of the raiding that has been going on, a clearly false assumption. They don't need any excuse to declare war; they simply take any opportunities.

What is the challenge that the king of Israel faces here? He faces the challenge to relax and seek out God's perspective about what is going on rather than jump to the wrong conclusions about the threat he faces. The little Israelite slave girl thinks biblically, but the Israelite king is a nominal believer in God, and an actual pagan, and so he has no habit of thinking spiritually. He very publicly tears his clothes; the sign of major grief in that day and cries aloud for all to hear that he believes this entire thing is a "set up" designed to attack his kingdom.

We are not told that Naaman saw this theatrical display by the king, but certainly everyone else at court that day did and it is reported to Elisha. He immediately sees the challenge to heal Naaman as an opportunity to prove who is the real God over all and tells the king so, and tells the king to send the great general to him for the healing he seeks.

**Verses 9 – 14.** Naaman comes in full pomp and splendour to the door of Elisha, and the prophet does not even go out to meet him. This is apparently the height of rudeness to a visiting chief of staff of a foreign power, where an insult could lead to a war in which your entire nation may be destroyed! The depth of the insult is clearly felt by Naaman. He is really angered at the off hand treatment he receives, for his expectation is that he will be healed by a prayer in God's name and the holding of the prophet's hand over the actual place the leprosy is on his body. (Verses 11-12.)

Naaman has a fixed idea of how God will work through the prophet, and all his expectation is fixed on only one possible scenario. This is why the Lord leads Elisha to deal with this man as he does. God is working on this man to build his understanding of faith, and the character of God, in the process of his healing, and he is breaking down the false viewpoint that healing, or any other act of God, must always occur the same way.

Elisha sends a servant out, (possibly Gehazi, although we are not told that it is him at this point), and he gives the message to Naaman, that he is to go immediately and immerse himself in the Jordan River seven times, and when he comes out the seventh time he will be healed. Naaman's response is even greater anger; firstly at not even seeing the prophet, and secondly at the bizarre and onerous thing he is told to do.

They are in Samaria and he is to drive all the rest of the day down to the Jordan River and do this bizarre thing in front of the eyes of all the Israelites. He feels shamed by the treatment of Elisha of him, and ashamed of stripping off publicly, revealing his leprosy to all who watch him, and then bathing in the enemy's river, dipping himself under the river seven times. He begins to drive away back towards Syria in a rage, but his servants now speak up. The esteem they hold this man in is seen by their risking their lives speaking as they do to him, for generals were not normally corrected by their men in this day.

The logic of his men is very clever. They know the weakness of their general, and they know his strong points. They know he is a pride filled man, very conscious of his dignity and position. They also know he believes that he is capable of great things, and would attempt great things for renown and fame. He is also brave, and is like a father to his men, and so he has their loyalty and love. They argue cleverly that if the prophet had asked him to do a great quest, that he felt was worthy of a hero, then he would have done it, and so why not do this even greater thing; humble himself and obey the voice of the prophet. He hears, reflects upon the words and he obeys the words of the prophet and goes to the Jordan River. He bathes seven times and his leprosy is completely healed.

**Verses 15 – 19.** Like the Samaritan leper in the story that Luke tells in Luke 17:11-19, Naaman feels great gratitude and returns immediately to the prophet to give thanks and acknowledge the things he has learned about God during his journey to and from the Jordan. His testimony is well beyond the gratitude of a man healed of leprosy; this is the thought through conclusion of a man who has spent time thinking about how the Lord has dealt with him to humble him and meet his inner needs as well as his physical healing. John 16:8-11, Ephesians 2:4-10. Naaman's testimony is to the identity, majesty, and power of the Lord God, beside whom is no other god.

This man turns from his idolatry and polytheism and embraces Hebrew monotheism. He confesses this to Elisha and then offers him the presents that he has brought to give for his healing. Now it was normal to deliver these at the time the request was made, and so traditionally they would have been given to the king with the introductory letter, but it appears that such was the king's response to the letter that the gifts were not presented at all at that time. They are freely offered now as a payment for the healing, and as such they cannot be received, for there is nothing that can be received by way

of payment for the work of God. Daniel will later make the same call to walk away from the gifts of King Belshazzar. Daniel 5:17.

There are times when the servant of the Lord is entitled to receive reward for their preaching work and there are times when monies are not to be received, lest they make a false issue for the person giving the money. Matthew 10:5-15, Acts 8:18-24, 20:33-35, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:32-33, 2 Corinthians 11:7-15, 12:14-15. The focus of the servant of the Lord is that nothing comes between the pagan and their need for the real Saviour, and that nothing stops their grace oriented growth in the Spirit.

At this point Elisha may have been able to receive the money for the schools of the prophets, for this man Naaman is now a believer, but Elisha decides, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to receive nothing at all, but give freely of himself. My suspicion is that the reason he doesn't receive this great gift is that it isn't from Naaman personally, but from the king of Syria, and he wants the message to get back to the king of Syria that the God of Israel doesn't need his wealth, and cannot be bought, but will graciously assist him whenever he calls upon His Name. My suspicion is that Elisha's refusal to accept the vastly wealthy gift has evangelistic motivation behind it.

Naaman now requests for a gift from the prophet; two mules burdens of the earth of Israel. He plans to spread this earth upon his floor and bow down upon the soil of Israel to pray to the God of Israel only for the rest of his life. He has a request also for pardon in advance for what he must do as the head of the Army of Syria. Their city-state god was called Rimmon, and when the king worshipped in his temple he was always accompanied by the head of the army and would hold the hand of his general as he prayed. It was required that all bowed their heads during the service to the god and so Naaman seeks forgiveness in advance for what he must do in his military ceremonial duties.

Elisha, on the basis of his spiritual perception as a prophet gives him a blessing in this that he must do to exercise his role as the general. This is an interesting exemption for a new believer caught in a pagan situation where he cannot serve without paying nominal respect to the pagan worship. Paul would appear to draw upon this interpretation in 1 Corinthians 7:13-24. The new believer is to be respectful to the pagan worship they are surrounded by in order to discover their new path in life and be led by the Lord into new paths. Naaman understand this, and now leaves for home, ready to testify to the saving power of the God of Israel, who is the only God over all. Psalms 1:1 – 2:12, Romans 1:16-17.

**Verses 20 – 24.** Sadly Gehazi has run out of patience living in the humility, and possibly even poverty that his master was content to serve in. Like Demas many centuries later, he has served well to this point, but loses everything for the wealth that is put before him. 2 Timothy 4:10. He sees several million dollars walking away when it could ensure a pleasant retirement for him and his family. Many pastors are under pressure from their wives and family to make more money, and bitterness over the hard times faced by the servants of the Lord has led to many leaving the ministry in disgrace or despair, or seeing their partners walk away with contempt.

Gehazi falls into the pattern of lust and by deception tries to get some money for him self while pretending it is for others. He believes that Naaman ought to have paid something and that it was wrong of Elisha to let this money walk away. He invents a story about two theological students coming to request funds. This sort of thing is palpably false, for the Lord knows all things, and would have had Elisha take the money if there was going to be a later need for it.

Gehazi speaks as if the prophet of God has made a mistake, and that God has been caught short in His supply for His people. He is also lying in a situation where the prophet of the living God can be expected to be told by God of this! Gehazi takes two talents of gold and two changes of garments and has Naaman's servants carry them to his house where he hides them. Given the great commotion that the arrival of these foreign visitors would cause in his household we must conclude that all this is done with the support, encouragement, and full knowledge of his family.

**Verses 25 – 27.** Elisha is a prophet of the Lord God, who the Lord will inform of any needed information, and so it was a dumb thing for Gehazi to try to fool him over any matter. The prophet asks Gehazi about his activities and he denies he has done anything or been anywhere. Elisha informs the foolish man that his spirit was with him when he went to Naaman and in the spirit Elisha has seen and heard everything that took place. He asks him the pertinent question; "Is it the time to receive wealth or not?" This is the question for all who have been deceived by the prosperity gospel to ask themselves also. There is a time for money to flow and there is a time when hardship will be the norm in our service for the Lord.

The Lord's purpose is not always to give prosperity, and all you need to do to check that fact out is look at the record of the heroes of faith. Hebrews 11:1-40, 13:5-6. Look also at Paul's advice regarding wealth and note his relaxation with whatever the Lord provided him, be it great wealth or great poverty. Philippians 4:11-14, 1 Timothy 6:6-8, 2 Timothy 2:3-10. The Lord wants us to focus upon our heavenly rewards, and be content (learn to be content!) with whatever He provides for us here and now. Gehazi has gone for enough wealth to establish himself as a seriously wealthy man, but all he will receive is the plague of leprosy. Gehazi is judged immediately and his guilty family with him, and his service for the Lord is over for the rest of his life.

There are some things that end our usefulness to the Lord and place us under the Sin Unto Death, and that is what we have here. This still applies today, and in my own ministry I have seen several men and women die under this sort of judgement because of their sinful lust or deliberate evil. In each case they acted in such a way as to place themselves too far from the place of restoration. They are not too far away from the forgiveness of the Lord, but they have acted in

such a way to eliminate their future usefulness upon the earth. Their sin or evil has disqualified them from further work for the Lord.

They did not appear to lose their salvation, and in one case that I witnessed, the woman involved testified to our youth group about the judgement she had received, and gave praise to the Lord for her forgiveness, and the opportunity before her death to warn us not to be as foolish as she had been. She died of a cancer that had grown so quickly that the doctors were amazed, but she was not, for its unusual growth occurred just after she had, as a believer, become entangled in a local occult woman's group. She told us that this was the reason for her judgement, and she accepted that, for she had lost her witness to these women by her compromise with their evil. She regained her witness only through her death.

Gehazi does not necessarily lose his place in heaven here, but he enters it through maximum discipline. He selected the path of immediate wealth and judgement, rather than humility and blessing.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. The little slave girl has lost everything except her belief in God. Facing a testing of her faith that as a child was equal to Job's suffering, she keeps her hope fixed upon the Lord and is able to put aside her trauma memories and love her master and mistress. She sees past the tragedies of her circumstances and seeks the Lord's path through them and into the new world she has found herself in the midst of. This little girl challenges us to focus upon what the Lord is doing in our circumstances not upon the human viewpoint of them. We are to let the Holy Spirit show us God's perspective on the details of our daily life and so walk through the circumstances with spiritual power and discernment rather than fear and anxiety.

2. Naaman washes in the water of Jordan, but we are told to daily immerse ourselves in the washing of the water of the Holy Word of God, and so cleanse ourselves from all sin through its words. Ephesians 5:26-27, Titus 3:5-7, Hebrews 10:19-22.

3. Let us learn from the foolish Gehazi and walk in humility with the Lord our God, and not seek any money that the Lord does not provide us freely. Let us resist the evils of the so called "prosperity gospel" which is a false gospel that has misled many to their judgement. Let us resist the devil and so he will flee from us! 1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:10-11, 2 Timothy 2:22, James 4:7.

### **THINKING BIBLICALLY**

1. We must think with Holy Spirit filled discernment.

2. Our discernment is determined by the amount of God's Word we have read, understood and applied into our lives. Colossians 1:9-11.

3. Our human IQ is of no significance in thinking biblically, for the Holy Spirit will teach us as we seek to learn and are obedient to what we learn. 1 Corinthians 1:19- 2:16.

4. To think biblically we must apply what we know. James 1:21-25. There is no such thing as knowledge that remains unapplied, for such "knowledge" is simply self deception.

### **CHRISTIAN MATURITY – THE CROSS TO THE CROWN**

1. Salvation is only the beginning of the plan for man. After salvation the believer's objective is to advance in stages of spiritual growth on the path from the Cross to the Crown.

2. At each stage the believer faces increasing intense tests that can only be passed by faith. Paul in Romans 1:17 says believers progress from faith to faith. The five Hebrew words for faith illustrate the five stages of growth described in the New Testament.

a) **The Babe** – 1 Peter 2:2 – AMEN – the leaning faith of Genesis 15:6

All believers enter the family of God as infants when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. After the tremendous stress of birth, of coming from darkness into the light the infant's impulse is to nurse. The objective is nourishment but the baby also receives great comfort in feeding. God's objective for the spiritual infant is for growth, but He commences this with comfort. Not much is expected of a baby in his first few years; he cannot feed or change himself. Spiritual infants are just as helpless and need a great deal of nurturing, encouragement and patient encouragement and patient instruction.

b) **The Adolescent** – 1 John 2:13-14 – BATACH – the wrestling faith of Psalm 37:3

Adolescents are young, strong and eager believers. This is the stage where people have grown to the point at which they understand some of the principles of truth and are beginning to apply them to their lives. But like most adolescents, they have the growing pains of arrogance and rebellion against authority; they are sometimes too eager to act on their own, and this often gets them into trouble. They have knowledge which they mistake for wisdom, but they lack the experience.

Their tendency is to want to apply the truth to other people's lives. Adolescents may be troublesome, but at least they are not apathetic. They must be patiently trained and encouraged to channel their energies. No one makes it to maturity without passing through adolescence.

c) **The Mature** – Hebrews 5:14, 6:1 – CHASAH – the confident faith that takes refuge in the Lord – Psalm 57:1

The mature believer is able to take meat, the advance doctrine of the Word. A believer who has arrived at spiritual maturity knows enough about the Bible to take responsibility for his own life. He knows how to apply the Word of God to himself so rather than airing all his problems he knows how to solve them. He is not ready to take on every one else's problems but he can take control of his own life. He understands that God has a plan for his life and sets about fulfilling that plan. He gives himself to training and discipline, exercising himself and building spiritual muscle.

d) **The Hero of Faith** – Isaiah 53:12, Hebrews 11 – YACHAL – the healing faith of Job 13:15

Heroes of faith are men and women who have gone beyond maturity and have learned to fight the good fight. They have advanced beyond simply taking responsibility for their own lives to becoming responsible for the lives of other people. They are always willing to pick up fallen comrades, to treat their wounds, to encourage them and supply their needs. Heroes of the faith still make mistakes, they still fail but they always stand back up and go back into battle.

e) **The Friend of God** – James 2:23-25 – QAWAH – the enduring faith of Isaiah 40:31

The highest of all possible achievements in life is to become a friend of God. Every believer has the potential and the assets necessary to reach this point, but very few Christians do. It takes persistency and tenacity. The only people who make it this far are those who absolutely refuse to quit.

### **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – SPIRITUALITY or CARNALITY**

1. All Christians have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. When we allow Him to control our lives, we are said to be "filled with the Spirit" or "walking in the Spirit".

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be lost by

- a) Grieving the Spirit – by sin
- b) Quenching the Spirit – by not submitting to His leading
- c) This is called being carnal, or controlled by the flesh, the old sin nature.

3. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be regained by

- a) Confessing sin (1 John 1:9)
- b) Surrendering your life to God (Romans 12:1-2)
- c) This is called being spiritual, or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

4. Only the Holy Spirit in us can produce good works acceptable to God – anything in our own strength is unacceptable (Romans 8:8-9, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

5. The spiritual believer

- a) Imitates God. (Ephesians 5:1, 1 John 3:9)
- b) To glorify Christ. (John 7:39, John 16:14)
- c) Fulfills the Law. (Romans 8:2-4, Romans 13:8)

6. In the Bible the human race is divided in three Categories:-

[a] Natural Man – A person born physically alive, but not regenerated. He may be highly sophisticated, civilised, gentle and kind, but is completely ignorant of any spiritual phenomena. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Equivalent to the cold person in the church in Laodicea.

[b] Carnal Man – A person regenerated or born again but living his life under the power of his old sin nature. Prolonged activity in this area produces a Christian who is still a baby. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Equivalent to the lukewarm person in the church of Laodicea.

[c] Spiritual Man – A person regenerated and living generally in the power of the Holy Spirit. He discerns the difference between the things of God and man. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) He has fellowship with God in his daily life. (Ephesians 5:18-20) Equivalent to the hot person in the church of Laodicea.

7. Carnality

[a] The believer possesses an Old Sin Nature after salvation (1John 1:8, Romans 7:14,15).

[b]. The Old Sin Nature is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

[c]. The believer under the control of the Old Sin Nature is called carnal (1Corinthians 3:1-3, Romans 7:14).

[d]. The Old Sin Nature frustrates bona fide production in the life of the believer (Romans 7:15).

[e]. The Old Sin Nature is acquired at the point of physical birth (Psalm 51:5).

[f]. We are therefore considered spiritually dead at the point of physical birth (Romans 5:12).

[g]. The Old Sin Nature has several facets: areas of weakness produces sins, areas of strength produces human good. It has trends towards asceticism or lasciviousness. In many cases asceticism is considered to be spirituality.  
 [h] The Old Sin Nature is not found in the resurrection body.

### **THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

1. There are three types of judgement for believers in the Church Age.
  - a) Judgement of Sins:- The Lord Jesus Christ on the cross substituted the payment of all man's sins. The penalty of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) There is therefore no judgement for those in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1). The substitutionary death is given in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Galatians 3:13.
  - b) Judgement of Self:- We are told that if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. Failure to do so brings discipline. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 11:31, 32, 2 Corinthians 2:5-7, Hebrews 12:7, 1 John 1:9)
  - c) Judgement Seat of Christ:- This is the evaluation of the production of believers for the purpose of reward (2 Corinthians 5:10)
2. The Judgement Seat of Christ is a time of reward. Our human works (wood, hay, stubble) will be burned, our works in the power of the Spirit (gold, silver, precious stones) will be rewarded. (1 Corinthians 3:11-16).
3. At the Judgement Seat of Christ the believer can be denied reward but can never lose his salvation. (2 Tim 2:12-13)
4. Backslidden believers have no reward at the Judgement Seat of Christ. (Hebrews 6:7-12)
5. The Judgement Seat of Christ is illustrated by the famous athletic games in the ancient world. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
6. Rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ are based on grace. (James 2:12, 13)
7. Since we will be judged by Christ, we are not to judge each other (Matthew 7:1-2)

### **THE SIN UNTO DEATH**

1. There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 11:31,32)
2. The sin unto death is the physical death of a believer, where ultimate discipline is administered to the Christian due to unconfessed sin of a serious nature.
3. Confession of sin under the concept of 1 John 1:9 is the way to forgiveness.
4. Examples of sin unto death:-
  - (a) The Corinthian pervert – (1 Corinthians 5)
  - (b) The Corinthians who habitually came to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
  - (c) Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)
  - (d) Achan (Joshua 7:16-26)
  - (e) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
5. Whilst there is a sin unto death there is no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus – all believers (Romans 8:1).
6. The effect of the sin unto death is to reduce the time which a believer can spend on earth accumulating good of eternal worth. The gold, silver and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

**CHAPTER 6****INTRODUCTION**

As we read this chapter and the next we get the feeling of the terrible violence that surrounded the people of this time every day of their life. They lived in a time where warfare was the sport of kings, and if a neighbour's lands were unguarded, then they were raided and seized by the stronger king. The cost in human life and suffering was a daily burden of pain and anguish to those who lost a battle, and often spelt the end of their life.

Satan's hatred of mankind knows no greater expression than the uncontrolled lust for power, wealth and sexual exploitation that unrestrained warfare opens the door to. Satan and his demons forces are behind wars, but they shall perish. Jeremiah 10:10-13, Revelation 20:7-15. The Lord himself, a number of times, referred to the thinking processes behind the exercise of power projection by kings. Matthew 12:29, Mark 3:27, Luke 11:21-22, 14:28-32. The Lord also reminds us that while Satan remains active upon the earth, there will be "wars and rumours of wars", for it is only the Lord's coming again to rule this earth that will end the evils and sins that create warfare amongst men. Matthew 24:4-8, Mark 13:5-8, Luke 21:8-11.

In the many skirmishes and sieges that we read of in these next chapters we may wonder, where is Naaman in the Syrian Army? Is he here at all? Remember, this section of 2 Kings is not chronological and so we cannot know how many years pass between events and the exact order they occur, for the writer groups events in teaching or thematic order. It may be that Naaman is with the Syrian Army in these next battles, or it may equally be that his king has retired him from active service due to his change of religious faith, as it would be unwise for the king of Syria to have his general worshipping the God of Israel when they are attacking Israel! My suspicion is that the king that orders this invasion is the next king on the throne, Hazael. Chronology in the books of Kings is not the writer's concern and so it is most likely that the events discussed in this and the next chapter occur after the death of Ben-Hadad and the replacement of his general.

The other question that comes to many people's minds is also worth asking; where is the Lord in all this? It is a reminder to us that even in the midst of the carnage of warfare the Lord is watching over the believer, and none of us will die one second ahead of the Lord's plan for us. It is also a reminder that when the Lord judges individuals or nations through allowing warfare to fall upon them, there is no escape for the evil men. Jeremiah 14:13-18, 15:1-4, 21:7-10, 43:11-13, Ezekiel 5-6.

**2 KINGS 6:1-33**

**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. **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. **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?

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 4.** The sons of the prophets appear to live in community, almost like the monks of the Middle Ages. Their particular training college and living centre in Gilgal is too small for them and they seek the prophet Elisha's guidance as to where to go and how to make their move. This story gives us a very interesting historical insight into the way people moved house in the ancient world, as well as their administrative structure under Elisha. When the dwelling was to be abandoned the main supporting roof beams were taken with the owners and re-used in their new dwelling. This is helpful from an archaeological perspective, as it explains why buildings on certain sites have decayed and worn away so thoroughly. Once the roof is removed from a house the walls will erode very quickly in wind and rain.

The sons of the prophets request Elisha's presence during the move and he moves down from Dothan/Samaria to Gilgal to assist them dismantle their houses and each man carries one beam each and they head to their new site on the banks of the Jordan River. There they will build either stone walls from the stone material lying around, or make mud bricks for the walls. The support beams are then cemented into the side walls. They will then gather and bind flax or straw for thatching for the roof materials, which will be mixed with mud. This will form the roof covering, but it is laid over a lattice work of smaller diameter wood that is laid over the major roof beams they have brought down from Gilgal. The wood they cut by the banks of the Jordan will be mainly for the lattice work that forms the framework for the mud-straw/flax covering of the roof. Total cost of construction = zero! This is a good example of cost effective mission building.

**Verses 5 – 7.** Iron implements were very expensive items in the ancient world and to lose an iron axe head was to lose an item that may cost several months wages. These theological students are very poor and so would be unable to buy any replacement items that they borrowed and then lost. To us this miracle appears strange and many commentators place it in the legend category, but it teaches an important aspect of the character and care of God for His poor servants. The Lord cares for the little details of our life. Let us remember, that in God's sight, there is no detail at all of our life that isn't "little" in His eyes. The axe head literally floats to the surface of the water and is able to be retrieved, refitted on the handle and then the wood chopping continues.

Most of the wood chopped down for the building is wood or scrub type woody plants between 1 – 4 cms in diameter, as this is then woven into lattice work frames, laid over the roof support beams, and the straw and mud mixture laid over the top of that. This sort of construction meant that a roof could be broken up easily and repaired easily, and that is what the four friends did when they lowered their paralysed mate through the roof for Jesus to heal him. Luke 5:18-19.

Some larger trees will have been needed for additional roof support beams as they are expanding their dwelling places to accommodate more people, and it may have been that it was chopping down one of the larger trees that led to the loss of the axe head. The prophet, by urging the man to throw in the handle or the axe, or another piece of wood after it, does not make the axe head rise, but it was a great way of getting the person to be involved in the action of God. By expressing his faith in obedience, he strengthened his own walk with the Lord, who then demonstrated His care for him. The Lord many centuries later would at times also use small actions for people to do to strengthen their faith before He worked a miracle for them.

**Verses 8 – 12.** The king of Syria, (possibly still one of the "Ben-Hadad" line of kings) decided to resume raiding attacks upon Israel's territory to assert his dominance, provide on-going "on the job training" for his army, and win plunder. He lays plans for a series of raids and selects his targets personally with his closest advisors. As we noted above, Naaman is not mentioned, and so, I can only conclude he is no longer the general. The king selects the targets and sends off raiding parties to attack without warning a city and take it before the Israelites can muster their army and defend it.

The Lord however builds upon the work He has done with Naaman to convince the Syrians that He alone is the God to be worshiped and that Elisha is truly the prophet of the one true God. Every time the king selects a target city to attack, the Lord informs Elisha, and he tells King Joram, and the king ensures that a mobile armed force is on the spot to stop the Syrians being able to seize their objective. The king of Syria suspects that he has a traitor in his midst, but one of his servants tells him that it is Elisha, the prophet of the one true God who is telling the king of Israel every move the Syrian's plan even before they muster their army. Psalms 139:1-4, Isaiah 29:13-16, Jeremiah 23:23-24, Daniel 2:20-47, 4:9-18. God knows the secrets of the hearts of every man; nothing is hidden from Him. Matthew 6:4-18.

**Verses 13 – 16.** The Syrian king must check out where Elisha is. Now if Naaman is there with him he knows where Elisha's house is, for he visited it. There are only two conclusions to this; either Naaman isn't here at this time, or that they all know that the prophet moves around through the year and it is hard to identify in advance where he is at any set time. This man Elisha knew that it was wise to be of "no fixed abode" when men may hunt for your life.

The Lord also understood the importance of mobility in ministry when men seek your life, and we need today to be unattached to things that tie us down; always ready to move where the Lord sends us. Matthew 8:20, Luke 9:58, John 3:8. Spies need to be sent to find out where Elisha is at this time and they work out that he is in the city of Dothan, about twenty kilometres north from Samaria. The king's plan is to send a large fast moving raiding party and seize the prophet of God and bring him to Syria so that he might not frustrate the plans of the Syrians any further.

The significant mobile strike force of the Syrian Army is dispatched, to move with speed to Dothan, before the prophet can slip away to another place. They arrive over night, surround the city, and when the servant of the prophet awakes in the morning the hills are covered by the enemy army drawn up ready for battle. This is not a siege army, but their mobile army, designed to intimidate the people of Dothan, and guarantee the handover of the prophet quickly, rather than settle down for a long siege.

They have surrounded the city so that none can escape and warn Samaria about what is going on to the north until it is too late. The Syrians cannot afford to undertake a siege of even a few days, for the Israelite Army is just twenty kilometres down the road in Samaria, and if they don't get the prophet handed over quickly they will be forced into an open battle with the Army of Israel led by King Joram.

The servant of the prophet is frightened when he sees the chariot and cavalry forces of the Syrians drawn up on the hills around. This is not a large army but it is sufficient to seize this city, and it is the professional and fast moving army of the enemy, and the people know that these men mean business and they will take no prisoners if they have to seize the city by force.

The situation however is not hopeless, even though from man's perspective it is serious. Elisha sees things from God's perspective at all times. He sees the protection of the Lord's host around him at all times, and he prays that his servant may see the power of God around them, for when God's people are in trouble, the words of Elisha are to be remembered. "Fear not, for those that are with us are more than those that are with them." Also read the following great promises and challenges regarding fear and faith in the Word of God.

**Exodus 14:13-14,** "13. *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*  
14. *The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*"

**Psalm 3:6-8,** "6. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*  
7. *Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*  
8. *Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.*"

**Psalm 11:1-3,** "1. *In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*  
2. *For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.*  
3. *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do.*"

**Psalm 27:1-3,** "1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*  
2. *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*  
3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*"

**Psalm 46:7-11,** "7. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*  
8. *Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.*  
9. *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*  
10. *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*  
11. *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*"

**Psalm 55:18,** "18. *He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.*"

**Psalm 118:10-18,** "10. *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.*  
11. *They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.*  
12. *They compassed me about like bees: they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.*  
13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.*

14. *The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.*
15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.*
16. *The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.*
17. *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.*
18. *The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death."*

**Isaiah 8:10-15**, "10. *Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.*

11. *For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,*
12. *Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.*
13. *Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*
14. *And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*
15. *And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken."*

**Isaiah 41:9-16**, "9. *Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

10. *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*
11. *Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.*
12. *Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.*
13. *For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.*
14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*
15. *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.*
16. *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel."*

**Matthew 26:51-56**, "51. *And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.*

52. *Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*
53. *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*
54. *But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*
55. *In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.*
56. *But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."*

**Philippians 1:21-30**, "21. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

22. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*
23. *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*
24. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*
25. *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;*
26. *That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*
27. *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*
28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*
29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*
30. *Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."*

**1 John 4:4**. "4 *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."*

**Verses 17 – 20.**

The prophet prays that his new servant may see the angelic army that the Lord has always standing by his servants. The prayer request is answered and the young man sees the great army of the Lord with their cavalry and chariots of fire. He is now awe struck by the power and majesty of the Lord and sees that the enemy are outnumbered and out-powered, and they are not even aware of it. It is the reference here to the "chariots of fire" that makes me believe that Elijah was uplifted to heaven in one of these angelic transports, accompanied by a tornado, but that the tornado like event was only accompanying the angelic transport, it was not the means of transport. Having seen

the mighty army of the Lord on the slopes facing the Syrians the young servant of Elisha has a different perspective of the threat they face in the city.

The next prayer concerns the defeat of these forces. The prophet prays for them to be blinded to the reality around them. Having prayed this prayer he then boldly walks out to meet the army and their commander. These men can clearly see, but what they see is distorted and they fail to recognise the prophet. They are in an altered state and open to suggestion. The prophet tells them that they are in the wrong place and he boldly offers to lead them to the right place.

They agree and follow the prophet meekly like lambs to the slaughter. He leads them the twenty miles down the road to Samaria, where the king of Israel has a nasty, then exciting surprise, when he looks out his window. He sees this significant army helpless within his walls, and totally at his mercy. By the point the prophet prays for them to have their eyes opened and really see correctly they are totally surrounded by the king of Israel's troops.

**Verses 21 – 23.** The king of Israel is now very respectful to Elisha, calling him “my father” this time, and in a very excited manner asks for permission to kill the enemy while he has the chance. This army has been saved to teach a lesson in grace and power to the king of Syria and so it is not the Lord's will to destroy them at this point, but by treating them well, send a strong message about the power and majesty, and the great grace of the God of Israel, to the pagan king of Syria. He has already been pre-evangelized by Naaman. The king of Israel then opens his food stores and feeds this mighty army, and when they have eaten and drunk all they wish he sends them home to Syria with a message of peace. For a long time there is then peace between the two nations. Now the very next verse tells us of a serious siege of Samaria by the Syrian Army, and so we have strong evidence here for the lack of chronological order in this book.

**Verses 24 – 31.** At some time after these events a new king of Syria, probably Hazael (the first or the second or the third! – many had this name), 2 Kings 8, besieges Samaria. The siege is long and hard and provisions in the city run out. There is great famine in the land of Israel and the city of Samaria in particular, and many die of lack of food. The two sorts of food that none would even look at in times of plenty are now expensive items. It is incredible to think of eating donkey's head, but even more incredible to eat dung, but people did when food ran out.

We could head this chapter up, “dung for dinner”, but that would be too humorous, for this siege leads also to the horror of cannibalism. In the warnings against apostasy given to God's people in Leviticus 26, and Deuteronomy 28, cannibalism is identified as a final result of the worst of sieges, and this event described in these verses here before us underlines the total rebellion of God's people in the northern kingdom. They had one of the greatest prophets in their midst, but the great majority of them had ignored his words and so they fall to depths that they could not have imagined in times of peace and prosperity.

The king is dressed in his robes, but beneath them he has sackcloth indicating mourning, but sadly, as we will see, this is more hypocrisy than real grief and genuine biblical repentance. He certainly will express grief at what he hears has happened but it quickly becomes rage at Elisha, and when people hate God's servants it is an indication that they hate God. **Matthew 7:13-23, Luke 6:22-31, John 15:18.** I will leave you to read the words of the verses describing the cannibalism, as they are so shocking that they speak for themselves.

Now having seen the great shock felt by the king, then notice he blames Elisha for this calamity and wishes to cut his head off immediately he hears of this cannibalism. Does he blame Elisha for letting the army, that now besieges them, escape all those years ago? Does he blame Elisha for the calamity, because Elisha is constantly preaching righteousness, and accusing the king and people of unrighteousness, and explaining that this is the cause of the Lord's judgement upon them? I suspect that it is a mixture of all these things and more besides, for when evil men face the judgement for their evil, they normally seek righteous people to blame for their troubles. Read again the three Gospel passages above.

**Verses 32 – 33.** Elisha is still in the city under siege and is sitting with the elders of the city at this very point the king meets the woman who has eaten her young son. An assassin is sent immediately by the enraged king to kill the prophet, and he is barely stopped by the door being quickly barred by the prophet when the assassin arrives at the house where the prophet is meeting the elders. The king has second thoughts about his hasty order to kill the prophet and follows after his evil assassin, and fortunately arrives within seconds of the door being barred against his man.

It is a close run thing and would make an excellent action movie! The truth is always more exciting than any fiction. When the king arrives, the door is opened, and the king is more thoughtful in his response to the prophet, but his question is still a desperate one. The king fears they have waited too long for the Lord to answer their prayers for deliverance, and the horror of cannibalism has shocked him into desperate action. He pleads with the prophet for an answer to the question of their deliverance.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Cost effective ministry is our call as pastors and teachers, and it is the call through all the Ages of history. The Lord requires perspiration from us in His work, and a readiness to do the things that enable minimum finances to be tied up in buildings and equipment. The sons of the prophets were ready to dismantle their old houses, re-use their roof beams, and carry them many miles to the new site. They were then fit enough, and ready, to cut wood, build walls, and make new roof frames and then assemble their new homes. They were prepared to borrow equipment to achieve their goals and do all the work without cost to the Lord's people. This is the model for mission work that we need to keep in

mind, for much can be saved if the Lord's people are ready to utilize the simple tools and techniques that still work in today's world. Let us not be too quick to fund raise for things that can be built locally with "sweat equity". It is also a good rule of thumb that no minister or missionary is to be employed in any great work who has not proven themselves ready to get their hands dirty on a building site! God does not normally call His servants to a five star serviced ministry! Daniel is the only exception I can find in scripture to this general rule. Let us be ready to serve in humility and contentment. Philipians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-8, Hebrews 13:5.

2. Pastor, how boringly predictable are you in your habits and living arrangements? Now if you are called to remain in one place, that is fine, but are you ready to move where the Lord directs? Are you so attached to the things that surround you that you cannot move to a new place to serve the Lord? Elisha was always ready to move to a place where there was work to do, and so let us be ready to cast aside the things that tie us down into the mundane details of ordinary life. Matthew 6:25-34. It is all too easy to live just like our unsaved neighbours and trust to the so called "certainties" of daily life rather than being ready to go where the Lord wants to do what the Lord wants. "Let us be flexible until we are horizontal!" (That is; lets be ready to do anything and go anywhere the Lord calls us until we die!)

3. Let us always remember that "greater is He with us than he that is in the world as our adversary". Satan and his demons have great power but it is no-where near the power of God, and that is the power that we move in. Let us draw upon the power of the living God in our walk through the world today. Let us also be ready to exert energy and spend time in the Lord's work. Elisha's prayers are mighty and lead to the blinding of the enemy army, but he then must walk with them twenty kilometres to the place where the army of Israel is ready to surround them. Let us always be ready and able to walk and work as hard as the Lord may call us to. Let us keep as fit and strong as is appropriate to our age.

4. How long have you waited for the Lord to deliver you in any fearful situation pastor? We can be tempted to chase after man's solutions, even evils as bad as the cannibalism the woman in the story fell into, but the Lord's challenge is to wait upon His deliverance. The people of Samaria may have waited for many months, even years and at times we may wait for years for the Lord's answer to prayers.

## **REPENTANCE**

1. Two words are translated repentance in the New Testament:-

a) Metanoia – META – to change, NOIA – the mind, which means to change one's opinion or mind about something or someone.

b) Meta Melamai – to feel sorry for – an emotional reaction because of acts undertaken.

2. Repentance in salvation is to change one's attitude toward the person and work of Christ. (Luke 13:3,5, 15:7, 10, 16:30, 3 1, Acts 17:30, 31, 20:2 1, Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9)

3. Repentance is used in salvation mainly for the Jews. The Jews had seen Christ as a great teacher, a wise man, a prophet. They repented and now recognised him as the Son of God. In the case of the Gentiles, the word believe is used. (Acts 16:31) as they had no previous ideas about the person of Christ.

4. The Fruit of Meta Melamai, such as penance and sorrow does not save. E.g. Judas repented of his actions and went to eternal damnation.

5. However, Godly sorrow works repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)

6. The Holy Spirit is responsible for repentance in salvation. (1 Corinthians 2:14, John 16:8-11) It convicts of sin, righteousness and judgement.

7. The Believer is told to repent from dead works or human good.

8. When God repents it is symbolic (Genesis 6:6, Exodus 32:14, Judges 2:18, 1 Samuel 15:35, Jeremiah 15:6, Amos 7:3, 6, Hebrews 7:21)

**CHAPTER 7****INTRODUCTION**

God delivers His people when they turn to Him in repentance. God delivers through His called servants and the obedience of His people to them. God also delivers due to His grace and love for His people. God is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but the majority do perish because of their desire to walk away from their God and refusal to bow their knee to Him. All these principles come together in this deliverance of Israel from the Syrian Army. The Lord weaves together people and events to bring deliverance. Judgment remains God's "strange work", never his preferred work. Isaiah 28:21, Ezekiel 33:11, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 20:11-15.

There will be another time when a siege will end with a dramatic deliverance from the Lord, and the second will be even greater. That time will be the destruction of the Assyrian Army, in the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, and Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum the prophets. 2 Kings 19:34-37, 2 Chronicles 32:21-23, Isaiah 37:36ff. Isaiah will lead a great revival within the walls of Jerusalem and all the survivors of the people will rejoice in the Lord and be faithful to Him and live to see His deliverance rather than the slavery that the Northern Kingdom experienced through their persistent paganism. 2 Kings 18:10-12.

This chapter ends with a direct judgement upon an official of the king of Israel who doubted the prophet and publicly insulted him and his words. The great sadness I have as I write these words about the two great deliverances, is that the two great destructions of Jerusalem were the result of final and persistent rejection of the warnings of the prophets and the Lord of Glory Himself. The first fall of the city in 586 BC occurs after the rejection of the ministries of the prophets Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah, and the temple and city is restored after 535 BC, when there is repentance as a result of the work of Ezekiel and Daniel, then Haggai and Zechariah. What great sadness evil brings.

**2 Chronicles 36:11-16**, *"11. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.*

*12. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.*

*13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.*

*14. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.*

*15. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:*

*16. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."*

The second destruction of the temple and city occurs in 70 AD, forty years after the rejection of the Lord of glory, who came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 5:17. This time the full restoration of the people awaits their full repentance. Zechariah 12:10ff. They are restored in disbelief, as we see today in the land of Israel, where there is a pagan nation, but one that still rejects the events that led to the Cross and Empty Tomb.

Full repentance will however occur, and a prophet of the first restoration gives us the time table and the actions that will be associated with the second, Zechariah 12:3 – 14:13. This is a passage that even describes the use of thermo-nuclear devices in the final battles around Jerusalem. (Zechariah 14:12-13, also refer Isaiah 29:5-6.) God is yet to deliver His people in the most dramatic and apparently hopeless situation.

**2 KINGS 7:1-20**

**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. 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<sup>©</sup> 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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 2.** The prophet Elisha gives a specific prophecy regarding the Lord's deliverance of the city from the famine. Remember, the prophet of the Lord will always deliver a testable and verifiable prophetic word; woolly and vague prophetic words are not from the Lord. Elisha publicly proclaims that the very next day there will be so much grain available that prices will collapse and anyone with any money at all will be able to buy large quantities of grain cheaply at the city gate.

The official in charge of the food production and storage facilities mocks the prophet and his words. This is the man whose provision for the city under siege has in fact fallen well short of what was required! It may be that he is to be blamed for this, or that he was unable to rebuild supplies to the level required due to the long famine described in chapter 8, that may have occurred in the years before the siege. Whatever the truth about this man's ability to fulfil his duty, this man in sarcastic humour says aloud that he doesn't expect this miracle Elisha has predicted will occur.

Now, he makes it clear he believes that a miracle is required, although he mocks God and the prophet regarding the possibility of one. Even if the heavens literally open, he says, and God pours out the grain in person, this won't occur! His sarcasm indicates the depths of this man's paganism and the reason for his judgement, for the Lord is not mocked for long by petty men! Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 10:31, 12:28-29.

**Verses 3 – 7.** It is the despised men of society that are the ones who discover the sudden flight of the Syrian Army. These four men are locked out of the city due to their leprosy and are caught between the two armies and must beg and scrounge food from both camps. Even some pagans in the ancient world showed mercy at times to lepers, as all thought of the possibility of themselves being reduced to this plight, and desired that they might be shown mercy. Even some unsaved people, at times, understand this principle.

The famine has been raging for some time and these four lepers have survived to date, and that possibly speaks of the sympathy they have received from some within the walls, and from their enemies in their camp, who must also have fed them scraps of some sort to keep them alive. There is also another more sinister explanation. At times armies would use people with what they believed to be infectious diseases to undermine a city under siege even more. They would feed and supply such people and send them into the enemy's city to infect others, and so hasten the spread of disease that would render their defenders unable to man the walls when the final assault came. This may be behind their survival to date; that they have received food to remain alive as long as they stay by the city walls.

Whatever the reason for their survival, the Lord has ensured these four men are alive on this evening the prophet speaks to the elders. Now these four men do not know of the meeting of Elisha with the king for they are outcasts and denied all news and fellowship with the people within the walls. God's hand is however at work weaving together the destinies of men. They debate their next move, and identify that they will die within the next day or two if they sit by the gate, and so identify that to head for the Syrian camp is not a real risk, for the worst thing that can happen is that they will be killed quickly rather than die slowly over the next days.

They decide to head to the camp of the enemy, and they set off around twilight, and find the camp has been deserted for a few hours before their arrival. There is food a plenty and everything that the army had for their provisions are lying around the camp, indicating they fled in haste. Everything is left behind, even their wealth, and their horses. The deliverance of the city is due to the direct intervention of the Lord, who has caused a great sound to be heard in the camp, as if of a mighty chariot army, and the Syrians jump to the conclusion that they are being attacked from north west and the south east by a combined army of Egyptian and Hittite chariot forces, paid for by the king of Israel. They have fled north east back across the Jordan River towards Damascus.

**Verses 8 – 11.** The four lepers are like children in the candy shop without the owner present. They go from tent to tent and they discover vast wealth (all looted from other cities taken in this campaign), clothes, and food. They eat, drink and loot the property they find and hide it in the wilderness for themselves to return to use later. They go from one tent to another and take all their hearts desire. After they have systematically looted the second tent they realise that they have recovered enough food, clothing and wealth to last them a life time, and they then think of the others locked away in the besieged city, many who will soon be waking to what they will think will be their last day.

These men have been treated as outcasts but they have still a sense of their love for their people and their nation. They go to the gate and report their findings to the man in charge of the city gate (called here the Porter, but a senior and trusted Army officer – who apparently reports this discovery to the very official who mocked the prophet that day regarding the deliverance). This officer does not leave his post, as he has charge of the defence of the city's main gate, but gives orders to his junior officers, and they report the details to the king.

**Verses 12 – 15.** It is still night when the men report the good news. This is nice to read, as many would continue enjoying themselves until dawn, but these four outcasts are keen to share the good news and get it to the king as soon as the first flush of excitement at their discovery wears off. The king rises from sleep, and most of us are not the best as soon as we wake up. The king's lack of faith in the prophet's words is now seen. He has heard the words of Elisha that deliverance will come, but he does not believe them, and sees a trick of the Syrians in what he considers this "fake retreat".

One of his Cabinet makes a sensible suggestion however, and saves the lives of many by it. He suggests they take five of the horses that remain, and send out an armed party to check the story of the four lepers and then ride around the countryside to check for the Syrian Army. It is stated bluntly that five horses are all that remain of the mighty army of Israel at this point, the rest have been eaten.

Five horses are taken, with two chariot horses pulling one chariot, and three accompanying cavalry riders, and this small party sets off to check the story out. They head to the camp, and verify it is empty and then ride at full speed following the trail of cast away clothes, equipment and food, to the fords of the Jordan River leading to Damascus. Having got to the river Jordan by early dawn they have verified the story and they return and tell the king that it is indeed safe to go out to the enemy camp and loot it of all the food and provisions they can carry.

**Verse 16 – 20.** The starving people pour out of the gates and every family has at least one enemy tent to loot and seize all they can find. There is so much food available now that the price of food collapses and there is enough for everyone to eat again. The man who had mocked the prophet and the message of God regarding deliverance is crushed in the stampede through the gate. The writer repeats the reason for the death of this mocker of God, and that really underlines the seriousness of this at the time of writing.

These books of Kings were written, or earlier accounts edited together, after the first fall of Jerusalem, and the writer then wants to seriously underline the importance of obedience to the Lord during the Exile and after the restoration, in order that they do not repeat the disasters their evils have created in the past. God is not mocked, and this writer wants his readers and hearers to understand that to doubt or mock the words of the prophets of God is to invite personal and certain judgement.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. God is not mocked, and although His grace continues long after man's deserving of it is over, He moves against sinful people in the end. Do not be disturbed when evil men and women mock the Lord God and His Word, for they have done this since the beginning. Pass such people over to the Lord for judgement, as David did in the Psalms, and do not allow yourself to be distracted by them. Waste no energy on them, but focus all your energy on the tasks the Lord has given you to complete upon the earth, for the crowd of men will trample them under foot when their time comes.
2. Prophetic words are specific and verifiable, or they are nonsense. Do not be distracted by the many false prophets around today, for the enemy has always had more false prophets preaching his lies than there have ever been true prophets of the Lord. Focus upon the truth of God's Word against which every prophetic utterance is to be tested. Preach the word and let nothing distract you from that. 2 Timothy 4:2-5.
3. Good news is to be shared. The mental attitude of the four lepers is to be the mental attitude of the believer in their own community today. We are to freely share the truth to all who will hear, that the Lord has ample provision for our spiritual and earthly needs, and all He requires is our obedience to His Holy Word. Let us preach as we are called to!

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 8****INTRODUCTION**

The chronology here is unknown, and my suspicion is that this story may relate to events well before the siege of Samaria in the last chapter, as that serious siege may have happened only after many years of drought and famine were over. This may explain why the ruler of the storehouses didn't have the supplies to draw on for the siege also. The chapter initially discusses the Lord's care for the woman who cared for the prophet in his early ministry, and we are reminded that no-one ever loses by giving their substance to the care of the Lord's work and His people.

Gehazi is mentioned here, and that is another indication that indicates this is a story that occurs before the events of chapter 5, which ends with Gehazi's leprosy. Remember the writer has grouped the stories of Elisha by theme and for teaching purposes; chronology is not his concern. God's care for His servants in the midst of great need is the theme here. The writer has godly leadership as his focus, and he wants all his readers to have their minds centred in the truth of God's care for, and provision for his people.

The last part of this chapter catches up with world events around Israel, and the murder of the king of Syria and his replacement with the man who will launch the serious assault upon the land that leads to the siege of Samaria we saw in the last two chapters. God's word to this evil man, Hazael, through Elisha is the reminder to us that the Israelite people were not the only ones to receive the Word of God through this time, and that many nations were blessed by the truth through this period. Now the point is being made by our writer strongly, that the truth brings true blessing only to those who fully accept it; to all who reject it there is judgement, and that judgement begins with the house of God.

**2 KINGS 8:1-29**

**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. **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. **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. **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.**

**REFLECTIONS**

**Verses 1 – 3.** The woman of the village of Shunam who assisted him with the building of the prophet's chamber is in grave danger. A serious famine, as bad as the one in the days of Elijah is coming and the land she has will not be able to support her, and it would appear from subsequent events, there is other grave danger for her. By her return the land and buildings she owned have been seized by others, and this would not occur in the normal run of things, for Israelite land was recognised as belonging to a family and the city elders would support anyone who had family title.

There are dark forces operating in her local area, but we are not told what is occurring behind the scenes here. Her husband is not mentioned now, and it may be that he has died and others are making a play for her land. The danger is real and pressing, but she needs specific warning to leave her home and lands and so the Lord provides this for her. Many people do not want to see and accept that a dangerous situation is as real as it is. It is a psychological fact that kills many every year – they simply don't want to believe evil is actually evil! This woman needed a specific word from the Lord to save her life, and she gets it and obeys it.

Ironically the dangers from the malice of her own people are greater than the dangers from the pagan Philistines, and she is able to live amongst them for the seven years of the famine in relative safety. Famine for God's people is described in scripture as a judgement of the Lord, and the malice of her local people may be an indication of just how bad spiritually things have gotten over recent time in the north.

By the end of the seven years the woman returns, but she cannot re-enter her house and take up her farming again, for others have seized her land, and it would appear the elders do not support her claim to her land again. She must go to the king to get the help she needs. What occurs now is almost humorous, for the king gets so side-tracked that he and Gehazi actually forget about the issue they are tasked with solving for the woman.

**Verses 4 – 6.** The king hears the woman's complaint, and realises that this is the woman who knew the prophet Elisha, as she will have recounted how it was the prophet's warning about the famine that sent her away from her land seven years before. The king calls Gehazi in and asks him to recount all the wonderful stories of Elisha that he knows about. We have only a fraction of these stories recorded here in the scriptures, and Gehazi really starts telling a story or three! This is the clue that this comes from a time earlier than the events of Chapter 5.

The two men are speaking of the glories of the work of the Lord through Elisha when the woman interrupts and reminds them she seeks her land! Now two things are highlighted here in this little side story of note. Firstly, when there is actual need, the task of the people of God is to meet that need, not get side tracked onto true, pleasant, but irrelevant stories. First meet the need of the needy, then have your pleasant discussions! Secondly we realise again that people who love hearing stories of the works of God are not necessarily servants of the Lord.

This king is unsaved, and although he loves (at times) hearing of the works of the Lord, he does not want to be at the centre of the Lord's work, which is his call as the king. The woman cries out to remind the two men that she is there for help, and the king hears her speak and appoints an army officer to oversee the return of all her land and properties, and even the crops gained from the land since she left it fallow. Deuteronomy 22:1-3.

The officer appointed will take troops with him to ensure justice is done, and there will be some annoyed (and still maliciously evil) neighbours who now have to pay back their ill gotten gains, but will think twice about abusing again a woman who has the ear of the king. The story reminds me of the parable of the Lord about the unjust judge, who did justice simply because the woman asking for it was so persistently annoying. Luke 18:1-8.

**Verses 7 – 10.** At another time Elisha is travelling in Syria under the guidance of the Lord, and the king, Ben-Hadad, is sick. He hears the prophet of the Lord is nearby and seeks a prophetic word from him. Once again we are reminded that the prophet's of Israel were used to speak to all who were open to a word from the Lord. Liberal commentators make much of the viewpoint that Israel's conception of God came slowly, developing from a tribal god to the Lord of all, and that they were isolated from the mainstream, although influenced by pagan ideas which they incorporated into their scriptures.

As we have gone through the record of the Kings we see that the picture presented by the author is the exact opposite of this liberal fiction, for it is the pagans who seek the help of Israel's God, and whose faith is changed by contact with Israelites, not the other way around. Beware the satanic lies of the liberal commentators on the Old Testament, for the truth is nearly always the opposite of their position. Remember that the hatred of the enemy for truth is seen in the areas most damaging to the enemy, and the story of these kings is a gold mine of doctrinal principles that need to be learned.

King Ben-Hadad asks his Chief Minister, or Chief of Staff, Hazael, to see the prophet on his behalf. This man comes to Elisha at his lodgings and seeks a word from the Lord to take to his master the king. The question the king asks is, "Will I recover from the disease that has laid me low at this point?" He takes with him a sizeable present from the king for Elisha, possibly greater than that which Naaman tried to give him years before. It is a gift of goods that takes forty camels to carry, so it is a sizeable quantity of something!

Hazael refers to Ben-Hadad as the prophet's "son". Now this may be a Middle Eastern and poetic way of referring to his relationship to the prophet when he wants something from him, but it more likely refers to the fact that this king has found some level of faith in God, as Naaman did. It may be that the sending back of his army, as recorded in chapter 6, coupled with Naaman's healing changed this man's life. It is hard to be dogmatic here because the time line for the events is missing.

If this man has found faith, he has sadly not followed through and grown through fellowship with the prophet and increased knowledge of the Word of God, for he harbours an evil man in his midst, with his chief advisor Hazael, and he has not the spiritual discernment to keep himself safe from this evil. The message of the prophet is enigmatic; he will survive the disease, but he will die!

**Verses 11 – 15.** The lack of clear time line is frustrating here, because a man named Hazael was anointed by Elijah before his death, as the next king of Syria. 1 Kings 19:15-17. It is speculation about how much time has passed since this event occurred and there is no clear answer from what we have recorded here and else-where. Elisha knows of the prophecy of Elijah over this man, and he has revealed to his spirit just how violent Hazael will be as king to his own people and the people of Israel. He holds this man in his gaze until Hazael becomes embarrassed of the stare. As he looks he weeps at what he sees Hazael will do by way of the murder of others. It may be a number of years since Elijah anointed him, and he may be resentful about the delay in rulership, but he certainly takes this prophetic word as his trigger point to execute the king the next day before the words of Elisha become known by anyone else.

The things this man will do will be awful; he will burn cities with fire, slay the men, and rape and tear open pregnant women, murdering their children, and all older children he can find. He will declare a genocidal war upon Israelites. He denies any thought of such a war to the prophet at this point, but it is in his heart, and his heart is cold towards any feelings other than his own. He returns to his master the king, who asks him excitedly whether he will survive the disease, and he passes on the "good news", that he will survive the disease, but not the "bad news" that he is to die soon.

Over night he decides to act against the king. Over that night he will have gathered his supporters, so that his transition to total power is swiftly actioned. Once he has killed the king and is in control with his people around him, he will kill all Ben-Hadad's sons and supporters immediately. The sick king trusts this man and so when he comes into his room the next day with a wet towel he thinks it is for his fevered forehead. Instead, Hazael smothered the king and takes the throne immediately afterwards. His ruthlessness will deepen over the next years and the terrible vision of Elisha will be fulfilled.

Remember God is the creator of this space-time universe and so all prophetic words come from beyond space-time and reflect what will occur in time, but do not cause it. Those who act are free agents, and held responsible for their evil deeds, but all is foreseen by the one who made this space-time universe, and is beyond it. The future is certain to the One who is beyond time, but the result of our choices in space-time will unfold in time, while we are still within this universe. All of us leave this present Space-Time universe at death, and in eternity we face the full consequences of all our actions done in time – only those covered by faith in the blood of Christ escape eternal judgment for evil done.

**Verses 16 – 24.** This verse appears to indicate that Joram of Israel was five years into his reign when Ben-Hadad died, but that does not necessarily follow, for it was this year that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah died, and Jehoram (also called Joram) his son, follows him as king. Jehoshaphat had reigned for twenty five years, and had been a good king and followed the Lord God, although not perfectly. 2 Chronicles 20:31-34. The death of Ben-Hadad may occur at this time also, but there is no certainty of that from the text. Don't debate this, for we are too far from events, and our writer is concentrating on the significance of events, not their time sequence.

Jehoram/Joram reigned for eight years in Jerusalem and he was as bad as any of the kings of Israel, and he proved that by his choice of a wife, a daughter of Omri. He is compared to Hazael in his behaviours. He was evil but the Lord didn't judge Judah as he judged Israel at this time through the Syrians. Judah did however suffer the military failures that indicated their sinful state, and this was shown in the Edomite revolt and other campaigns described by the writer of Chronicles. The Joram of Judah did take decisive action against the Edomites and invaded their land, taking his mobile chariot army to Zair, and conducted a night attack on their forces, which had surrounded him. This indicates a serious level of military skill, good co-ordination, and battle courage.

Even the excellence of his military skills does not restore Edom to Judah's control until the days of the writer in the fifth century. The Edomites (by then called Idumeans) will only finally be conquered again by the Maccabees in the Roman period when they are forced to become Jewish. Their king then becomes the Jewish king; his name is Herod the Great! Libnah also revolted from Judah in this day, with its mixed population becoming an independent pagan city-state for a time.

Joram was however a ruthless and evil character, much like Hazael will later prove to be, and the writer groups their stories in his narrative to make this point. He murders all his siblings and all the supporters of the old godly king. 2 Chronicles 21:1-20. During his reign he also encouraged religious evils amongst his people, and the Lord allowed a number of enemies to invade and create suffering in the south. It was not as bad as in the north, but the eight years of his reign were tough ones for the people. Joram of Judah died of bowel cancer horribly at age forty, as a direct result of the Lord's judgement upon him. 2 Chronicles 21:18-20.

**Verses 25 – 29.** Ahaziah reigns in Judah after Joram of Judah. It is in the twelfth year of Joram of Israel that Ahaziah begins to reign in Jerusalem. He is selected as king by the elders of Jerusalem and although the youngest son of Joram is clearly felt to be the best of a bad bunch. He is only twenty two, and he reigns barely one year before his evil mother Athaliah will take over power from him. This is the daughter of Omri, Athaliah, and she has the evil of the northern royal houses within her soul in full. She counsels her son in evil while he lives, and he also surrounds himself with evil counsellors drawn from the northern kingdom. They counsel him to declare war on Syria, in association with Joram, son of Ahab of Israel, and he fights against Hazael. One of the battles is at Ramoth-Gilead and the Syrians wound him in the battle.

Both kings of the Israelites appear to have fared badly in the battles they fight, with Ahaziah wounded at Ramoth-Gilead, and Joram wounded at Ramah in another battle against Hazael. This chapter ends with the visit of Ahaziah to Joram at his summer palace in the Vale of Jezreel where he is recovering from his wounds. Their friendship is built upon their mutual paganism and it will end as such friendships end; with judgement from the Lord.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. When we need a word from the Lord we will always get it in a timely manner. The challenge is, having received a word from the Lord, we are to obey it and follow through on what we are told. Let us hear and obey the Lord's words to us.
2. Pleasant discussion about the Lord does not mean the people involved truly love the Lord. Remember Jesus words, "by their fruits you will know them", not just by their words alone. Lives that do not reflect the truth spoken by the lips indicate hypocrisy not faith. Be careful of people who love to talk about the Lord, but whose lives do not reflect the presence of the Lord, for such will normally be the most dangerous of enemies.
3. Each generation must make its own way in this world, and each generation must decide for the Lord, or face the judgement of God. Let us pray earnestly for our children, but mostly, let us set a godly example for them to follow and teach the truth by our lips and life. God is gracious to those who follow their godly ancestors, but they must make godly decisions to ensure this blessing continues. We are to remember the doctrine of SEPARATION below, and withdraw from evil men and women, and have nothing to do with those who practise evil habitually.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF SEPARATION FROM EVIL**

1. Believers are instructed to be separated from habitually carnal believers. (1 Corinthians 5:10, 11)
2. Separation is ordered from apostate religious organisations. (2 Corinthians 6:17)
3. Separation is commanded from unbelievers where scripture is compromised by the relationship or marriage, business partners. (2 Corinthians 6:14 ff)
4. Separation is commanded from the human viewpoint. (Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17, 18)
5. Separation is commanded from pseudo spirituality. (Romans 16:17, 18)
6. Separation is commanded from those who seek pleasure in fast living – pursuit of parties, immoral situations. (1 Peter 4:4)
7. Separation is commanded from other believers who reject Bible doctrine. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15)

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 9****INTRODUCTION**

The Bible records that where great sin and evil against God and His servants are concerned, "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay". Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalms 94:1, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30-31, 12:29. It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God who will judge with righteousness all men in the end. The judgement upon the house of Ahab and Jezebel is fully and finally worked through the hands of Jehu, one of his tough captains. It is too dangerous for Elisha to do the anointing of this man, but one of the younger prophets does it in his authority and the name of the Lord, and Jehu acts quickly to deal with the execution of the evil house of Ahab and Jezebel. The prophetic words regarding these evil people are fulfilled to the letter, but like all revolutions, the result is as bloody as the tyrants it overthrows have been.

**2 KINGS 9:1-37**

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. 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 sepulchre 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.**

## **REFLECTIONS**

**Verses 1 – 10.** Elijah had received the order from the Lord to deliver the judgement upon the house of Ahab. 1 Kings 19:16. While the order had been given many years before, it was not completed by Elijah, but will be actioned by Elisha at exactly the right time. Elisha hears the Lord, and that is the call of all His servants. We are to study the Word and meditate upon its truth, and so be ready to act when it is exactly the right time. Elisha identifies that it is exactly the right time to fulfil the Lord's word to Elijah and anoint Jehu, but it is too dangerous for him to go to the city of Ramoth-Gilead where Jehu is with the Army. His arrival will arouse immediately suspicion, and so he appoints a younger prophet who he can trust to carry the message and anoint Jehu in accordance with his instructions.

The instructions are precise, urgently given, and secret. These instructions have waited several years to be followed through on, but once the time is right, they are to be actioned with all speed. This is a principle in all important work; no matter how long the preparation is for a task, once its action is ready, it is to be done in haste with precision. Preparation time is always given by the Lord so that all will be ready when the order to "go" is given. The young prophet is to locate Jehu, take him into a private place and anoint him with oil and pronounce the blessing of kingship upon him, and the solemn charge to execute judgement upon all the male members of the family of Ahab, and upon Jezebel. Having anointed the new king and announced the words he is given, the young prophet is instructed to flee for his life.

He arrives at the city of Ramoth-Gilead, which is in effect a military camp due to the threats of the Syrian Army, and he recognises Jehu very quickly, and reports that he has a message for him. They go into a house where he anoints him with oil, but as we will see, in his excitement at his task he has behaved in a strange way, and he speaks rather loudly, and so all he says is noticed and overheard by other officers standing outside. The charge to Jehu is clear:

1. He is anointed by God king over God's people Israel, and so he is to remember they are God's people and he is to be godly in his rulership!
2. He is to kill all members of the house of Ahab in judgement for the murder of the prophets.
3. He is to smite Jezebel for her murders of God's people.
4. Every male of Ahab's line, and every henchman of Ahab, is to be slain.
5. The Lord will ensure there is no-one to bury Jezebel because of the great evils she did.

Having given this message he opens the door and flees back to where he was sent from.

**Verses 11 – 15.** As Jehu re-emerges from the house he clearly looks different, and his hair will have new scented anointing olive oil in it. Exodus 30:22-25. They know something is different about their captain. One of the servants of the king asks him who the "mad fellow" was? There is an indication in his question that he has not only identified this young man as a prophet, but clearly saw that he was agitated over his errand, and he possibly also heard some of the words spoken behind the closed door. Jehu tries to say, that because the fellow is mad, all he has said is nonsense anyway, but the truth is out now. After further questions from his friends and colleagues, Jehu finally speaks the truth openly to his fellow officers, telling them that he has been anointed king in the name of Jehovah.

They immediately lay their cloaks upon a high place, at the top of the stairs of a public building, set up a throne there and all do homage to him as their king. To lay ones cloak at the feet of a man was to acknowledge him as your lord, Matthew 21:7-8, Mark 11:7-8, and these men are happy to follow this mighty man, and raise rebellion against Joram of Israel. They blew their trumpets (shofar) and announce that Jehu is king already. Joram had seized Ramoth-Gilead to hold it against Hazael, but as we saw in the last chapter, he had been wounded in another battle at Ramah and is recuperating in the summer palace at Jezreel, overlooking the stolen vineyard of Naboth. Jehu tells all his supporters to secure the city of Ramoth-Gilead in order that none escape to warn the king at Jezreel that he has been deposed.

**Verses 16 – 20.** It is all high drama now, and as I read this story and the others of Kings I wonder why no-one has made a television series on the lives of these men, because they are so interesting and their lives so bloodthirsty and dramatic. Jehu rides at full speed in his war chariot with a small mobile army accompanying him to Jezreel. As the crow flies it is about 65 Kilometres journey, and over the roading system of the day about an 80 kilometre journey, and I suspect they took two days to do the journey in order to arrive fresh at Jezreel, ready for a short sharp battle if required, but they may have simply driven all day and night. These are tough veterans of many wars and they are hard men and well able to ride hard and fight harder, but their general makes sure they are rested and refreshed when they arrive.

The watchman on the tower of the palace at Jezreel sees them coming down the dusty road a long way off, and the king orders a single rider out to report who they are and whether it is war or peace. If the group is an enemy this is a suicide mission for such a soldier, but they are tough and obedient, and he rides out to meet Jehu. The king does not take any other precautions, and that foolishness will cost him his life. The soldier greets Jehu and asks the king's question; is this for war or for peace? Jehu does not answer directly, which is a way of saying, I have come to kill the king! He orders the soldier to join him, and he does.

The same thing happens again, with the same results. By the time the second soldier has fallen in behind Jehu the watchman at the city tower has spotted that it is Jehu, and that he is driving furiously fast, "like a mad man", and in this day that indicates either the enemy is behind him, or he is an enemy. In the Armed Forces this sort of behaviour is called

“hostile intent”, and all weapons are armed ready to fire at this point. There is danger in the wind here, and the king should feel it, but he does not appear to grasp the danger at all. He then does a very foolish thing; he rides out to meet his general in the open without an army behind him ready to fight, and with the greatest possibility being that Jehu is there for rebellion.

**Verses 21 – 26.** The place of the meeting is very significant for the nation and the king’s family, for it is in the very vineyard that belonged to the murdered Naboth. The foolish king of Judah joins Joram of Israel in his chariot, both dressed in their kingly robes. In their narcissistic foolishness they believe that their royal dignity guarantees them safety. They are so fat headed in their false dignity that they do not see or feel that their days are numbered, and that today is their judgement day!

It is a dumb question to ask an armed man; are you here for peace or war? You must know in advance when you face an armed man whether he is friend or foe, especially if he has an army behind him. In such a situation, the man who strikes most strongly and without warning will win, and the death of the king here guarantees Jehu the throne without further battles. It was foolish for the two kings to leave the safety of the walls of Jezreel, face their potential enemy without protection, and leave the gates of the city open ready for him to ride in later. This man is equally guilty as his evil father for the deaths of God’s prophets, and from the judgement visited upon him was clearly involved in some way with his mother in the murder of Naboth and his family.

Jehu makes it clear that he has come to judge them all for the evils that Jezebel has worked amongst the nation through her active paganism and sexual immorality. From his words we can tell that this woman was actively involved in occult practises associated with paganism and from 1 Kings we know she actively persecuted and murdered many of the prophets of the Lord. Joram realises too late his danger and tries to turn his chariot around and flee, and he calls to Ahaziah the king of Judah that this is treachery and they are about to be killed. The two men try to flee, but they have come out without their armed escorts or any real defences.

Jehu is a mighty warrior and he draws his battle bow and fires an arrow directly between the shoulder blades of Joram and it pierces his heart and he dies. He orders his captain Bidkar to take the body of the king and throw it into the field of Naboth and he makes it clear that this is the start of the judgement of the house of the evil king Ahab who slew Naboth unjustly, and we discover from Jehu’s words all the sons of Naboth as well. He then makes it clear that both of these officers were there on that terrible day when Naboth and his sons were murdered, and he calls upon Bidkar to remember the injustice of the deed that they all felt then, and the words of judgement pronounced by the prophet Elijah upon the house of Ahab and Jezebel. 1 Kings 21:17-24. In the very land that was apportioned to Naboth’s ancestors by Joshua the blood of his murderer will be shed.

**Verses 27 – 29.** After the murder of Naboth his family home had been made into a “garden house” for the pleasure of the king’s family, and it is through this place that the king of Judah flees from the wrath of Jehu. He slips away with Jehu in hot pursuit. It looks as if the pursuit may take some time and it is vital that Jehu enter the palace as soon as possible and eliminate any other claimants to the throne, so he delegates to an officer the killing of the Judean king.

Ahaziah is run down at the approaches to the city of Gur near Jibleam. He is possibly mortally wounded by an arrow from Jehu and he finally dies at Megiddo of the wounds he has suffered, but the pursuers do not kill his servants, who carry the body back to Jerusalem. This would be useful, for Jehu needs reliable “witnesses” to the events who will tell his story at the right time. From 2 Chronicles 22:7-9 we get additional information, but it is corrupted by some scribal copying errors and it is difficult to be exactly sure what occurs here with Ahaziah. It may be that he is taken barely alive, or dead, to Samaria before his body is released for burial in Jerusalem finally. The delay in the announcement of his death will greatly assist Jehu in his plan to seize total power over Israel and also be ready to deal with any threats from a resurgent Judah.

**Verses 30 – 37.** Jezebel may be around her mid fifties, or early sixties, by this time. At this time it is around 36 years since Ahab became king and married her. She is not too old to make herself look good from a distance, but she has put on weight, a fact that we will find out in a rather gruesome manner when she falls from the window. She immediately thinks of sexually seducing Jehu by exerting her sexual power over him. She applies make up and ties up her hair in the most attractive manner she can that makes her look younger, and then sits at the window and speaks seductively to Jehu when he rides into the courtyard.

She appeals to history to try to get Jehu to think again about his clear plan to slay them all. She refers to the failed coup leader Zimri, who slew his king and ruled only seven days. 1 Kings 16:9-20. She is trying to indicate that the Lord judged Zimri for his murder, and He will judge Jehu if he kills her, but she forgets that she is a murderer and under God’s sentence of death. It is interesting how often that evil people will misquote God’s Word and try to use it against the servants of God. Jehu does not even waste words on her; he ignores her and calls for any servants in the vicinity.

He calls out and asks who is for him in the palace, and two heads pop out another window. They are two eunuchs of the harem. These were men who were castrated and then placed as guards of the woman of the king’s harem. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain by serving Jehu, for he clearly is the man with the power at this point. They quickly enter Jezebel’s room and pick her up and throw her out the window which was on the second or third floor of the palace.

The writer then gives us the description of her landing on the flag stones of the courtyard below, and it is the words used that indicate she has put on some weight over the years. She splatters "like a ripe melon" on the pavement with her blood splattering the walls, and Jehu finishes her off by trampling her body with his great war horse. Her bloodied corpse is left bleeding on the stones as she left so many of God's prophets in past years.

Jehu is a true, tough, battle hardened, soldier, and so having just shot two kings, and trampled a queen to death, he sits down with his friends and eats and drinks to restore their health after their tough ride to get here. They also celebrate his kingship and bring in the new reign in rejoicing. After a good meal he thinks of Jezebel's body on the pavement and tells his men to take her body and bury it, for she was a queen, even though an evil one.

It is then that the men discover that the Lord's words have been thoroughly fulfilled in the manner of her death and the eating of her body by the dogs, for all they can find is her head, feet and the palms of her hands. The dogs have eaten all the rest, including all her fingers. When he is told by his men of this he recalls and quotes the words of Elijah as recorded in 1 Kings 21:23. There will be no place for her to be buried where people will look at her magnificent tomb and say, "So, this was Jezebel!"

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. In God's work there is always an issue of timing, and the Lord will ensure we are led to do things in the right time frame. Our job is to be ready to serve the Lord in any way that He calls us, and when He orders us to move, we move quickly and precisely to obey.
2. God's judgement is sure upon those who work evil. The Lord does not judge when we think it is the right time, but when it is actually the right time. The Lord moves against Jezebel and Ahab's children for the great sins they have committed in the land against God's people. They have enjoyed the pleasures of sin for their season, but the day of reckoning always dawns one day. Hebrews 11:25.
3. Once again we are reminded that the prophetic gift is proved by the precision with which the prophet tells the truth in advance of the facts being seen. Elijah and Elisha are precise in all they say and do and prove themselves God's men by the fruit of their lives and their lips. All prophets are subject under the laws of the prophets, and that means they are to have godly lives and verifiable prophetic words. If their lives are not godly and their words are not proven true, they are not God's prophets. 1 Corinthians 14:32.

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 10****INTRODUCTION**

Jehu takes very seriously the extermination of the sons of Ahab and sets about his task with vigour and with cunning, for he must ensure he flushes out any future opposition to himself at the same time. He obeys the Lord in full in this matter, but not in all things. While we are shocked at this massive slaughter, remember the majority of these men who die are well into their twenties and thirties, and they are the central apostles of paganism in the land, having supported their evil queen-mother Jezebel, and being part of the persecution of God's people in the process.

Jehu is also clever in his elimination of the key worshippers of the Baal religion, but he does not follow through completely personally and worship the Lord as Moses decreed, but retains the golden calf worship at Bethel and Dan. The altar of the golden calf at the hill of (Tell) Dan has been uncovered and excavated recently. Check this out on the Biblical Archaeological Review website, or Google "Tell Dan" and explore the excavation of this centre of Israelite compromise religion. While using the name of Jehovah they added paganism to the worship and so it was corrupt, and led the people astray into evil, just as liberalism does today.

**2 KINGS 10:1-36**

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. 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. 32 In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; 33 From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan. 34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 35 And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. 36 And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 5.** Ahab has been dead for fourteen years by this point, and so the youngest son would be around fourteen; considered an adult in that day. The seventy sons of Ahab may be also grand-sons, for in that day such was considered a son of the grand-father. This is the reason why in Hebrew genealogies a generation can be skipped without any concern to the writer or the original reader. Jehu is a careful and cunning old soldier, and will prove himself an excellent politician.

Jehu is not a young man, for as we saw in the last chapter, he was there when Ahab ordered Naboth slain, and saw Ahab enter his vineyard and take possession, and heard the words of Elijah. He will rule for nearly thirty years, and possibly dies in his seventies. He uses all his cunning to flush out any supporters of the old regime and Baal worship and target them all for elimination.

He writes first to all the elders of the cities of Israel and asks them to secure the sons of Ahab amongst them, and if anyone believes one of them is fit to rule, then they are to declare him so and make him king. This is an invitation for all of these elders to show their hand, and either declare war against Jehu or support him openly and deal with the sons of Ahab and Joram. If they believe the old king's house was worth fighting for, then they are to call their men to arms and fight for him, for Jehu makes it clear that he is about to act decisively against them all.

The elders know what has happened to the kings of Israel and Judah through Jehu's bow and they are seriously afraid of him. They send back a very conciliatory letter and give him permission to do anything that he believes is right. This is the thing he wants to hear, for he wants them implicated and associated in the death of the house of Ahab so that there is no going back for any of them.

**Verses 6 – 11.** He now sends a second letter, probably the day after he has received the first replies back by fast riders. The second letters tell the elders of the cities to behead all the sons of Ahab when they receive this letter and send the heads back to the summer palace at Jezreel. The sons were scattered amongst the leaders of the nation, who were tasked with their welfare, and now these same men are tasked with their execution. They know it is kill these young men or be killed, and they all comply with Jehu's order. Now remember most of these sons of Ahab were serious pagans and when the Lord orders the extermination of an entire household there is a very good reason for it. The Lord clearly orders this action and congratulates Jehu on its successful completion. Remember, that the Lord will judge the entire pagan world this way at the end of time. Revelation 19-20.

The heads of the sons of Ahab are delivered back to Jezreel in bags and Jehu makes two piles of the heads, much as the Mongol hordes would do centuries later, one on each side of the gate into Jezreel, so all who enter the palace can see the heads of the men who they used to bow before. Jehu waits until the full impact of the shock of this has sunk into the population over night before he calls all the people to him the next morning and speaks to them all. This group will include many older courtiers from the old regime.

His speech is a master stroke of politics. He takes full personal responsibility for the slaying of his master the king. He publicly absolves all the people and courtiers present from any responsibility for the coup-d'état, declaring them righteous, and himself the guilty one who slew the king. He then points to the heads, which will have been stacked in two piles of thirty-five each side, with their faces looking outwards, so that everyone could identify each and every son of Ahab.

He asks the rhetorical question aloud, "Who killed these men?" He doesn't say he ordered it, but identifies that all the elders of the land are behind him in the execution of this evil family of Ahab. This immediately sends out the message to all the court and people that the coup has been 100% successful and there is no opposition to it from any of the tribal elders of the land. Having identified that the political landscape is settled behind him, he then brings the religious one behind his actions also.

He quotes the words of Elijah from possibly 20 years before. 1 Kings 21:19-24. Having announced this divine sanction for his actions, he then sends his men through the crowd and rounds up every relative of Ahab and kills them all there and then, and takes all the priests and courtiers who supported the paganism of Ahab and Jezebel and their son Joram, and he kills the lot after this speech to the crowd. The effect of this would be total terror for the survivors of the massacre; all would know that this is a man who you cannot oppose and live.

Lenin once said, "The purpose of terror is to terrorize". By this he meant, that if you want people cowed into submission, you must unleash a thorough and systematic terror upon the guilty, so that the good are in fear of ever opposing you.

Jehu did this thoroughly, and then he immediately set about to plan a trap for the last remnants of the Baal worshippers who are outside the court circle. He moves thoughtfully, but very decisively and quickly. Psalms 125:5, Proverbs 13:20.

**Verses 12 – 17.** The death of king Ahaziah of Judah has not had time to be reported back to Jerusalem before his relatives have headed north for some pagan fellowship and fornication. They are oblivious to the events of the last two days in Jezreel. Now do not think I am too harsh upon them with my comments above, for the Lord has decreed the death of the entire family of Ahab because of their paganism and immorality, and the only reason the family of the kings of Judah could be heading north would be to partake of their evils also.

These forty two men of the royal house of Judah are on the pagan path of Baal. Read the passage in Chronicles on this man Ahaziah. 2 Chronicles 22:1-9. Read and note especially verses, 3-4, and 7. God's hand was in the execution of these people. This king and his relatives followed all the evils of their relatives in the north, and the influence of Jezebel's religion was within them all. The Mosaic Law was clear regarding all who forsook their faith and followed after the paganism of the nations around them; they were to be executed. Deuteronomy 13:1-18, 18:9-14, 20-22.

Jehu slays all the relatives of the king of Judah who have come to the north for pagan festivities. They are taken out of sight into a resting place for shepherds where there is a refuse pit, and the men are all killed and thrown in the pit. They are probably covered over there so that the deed is not reported for some time, as Jehu wants to secure Samaria, the capital, before any war with the south breaks out. He has guaranteed however that the majority of the royal house of the south are now dead. Chaos will reign in the south, and that means he will have time to build strength. The Lord will ensure that a child is saved from the house of David and he will be brought up in godliness, and so this extermination of the royal house works positively for both kingdoms, as the evil are eliminated, and the Lord ensures the one who is good survives.

After executing these royal men of Judah Jehu casually gets back in his chariot and rides on towards Samaria. After a short distance he meets Jehonadab, the father of the Rechabites walking along the road. This man is an acknowledged holy man, and was honoured, with his family, for their on-going commitment to the nomadic and pure, ancestral, pastoral life style. These people were Kenites, who believed God and followed Moses. They kept the Mosaic Law and by sheer determination through the centuries, they kept their religious faith pure and their life style unsullied by the town based paganism that surrounded them. Jael the Kenite slays Sisera in the days of the Judges. Judges 4:11-23, 5:24. These people will remain true to the Lord all through their history, and will be amongst those from the northern kingdom who flee to the south in the days of the Assyrian Crisis, and are in Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah, and are blessed by the prophet of the Lord. Jeremiah 35.

Jehu sees the leader of the Rechabite clan walking along and greets him and also formally asks whether his heart is with him in his venture or not. The old man answers Jehu that he is with him. It is likely that this man had heard of the prophetic words over Jehu and his anointing, and he certainly will have heard of the events in Jezreel by this point. He is heading in the same direction as Jehu, so is coming from Jezreel towards Samaria also. Jehu takes the old man's hand and lifts him into the chariot and they ride together. Now it looks good for Jehu to have this man with him in his chariot, and as pastors we need to be aware of this political manoeuvre. Many people want to have a well known holy preacher with them to cover their own sinful life style with the cloak of holiness provided by the man of God. Jehu is doing the Lord's work at this point however and so there is no compromise in Jehonadab's actions. Jehu invites him to come along and see his "zeal for the Lord".

When they arrive in Samaria Jehu sends his men out with a list of names and slays every person associated with the sins of Ahab and fulfils the words of Elijah, and avenges the blood of all the prophets of God who Ahab and Jezebel slew. Many of these guilty pagans have enjoyed the fruits of their sins and evils for over twenty years, but the day of reckoning comes with Jehu's arrival in the city.

**Verses 18 – 28.** Jehu has used terror to cower the general population, and he now sets a trap for all who remain who believe that Baal worship is the way to win political power in the new regime. Baal worship has been very popular, but the work of Elijah and Elisha has severely restricted it over the last twenty years since the confrontation on Mt Carmel. 1 Kings 18. Jehu understands that this evil religion is at the heart of the disasters that have befallen the nation, and he seeks its total elimination. He sends out his third circular letter and calls for all who love and worship Baal, (and believe they will gain political power by so doing), to come to the main Baal temple at Samaria on a certain day. He flushes out all the surviving priests and devotees of Baal by this and they all gather for a big formal celebration of their paganism. They fill the temple of Baal from one wall to the other. They are packed in like sardines!

They believe that Jehu is supporting them and that they will achieve political power by being Baal worshippers, so he has got two categories of people in this temple on this day. He has got the dedicated pagans, and the political pagans who will use religion for their own power. Both groups are equally dangerous to the nation, and he gives his orders, (once these evil people are all inside), to his troops. Before he gives the execution order, he ensures there is no worshipper of Jehovah the Lord in that temple at all.

Both he and the leader of the Rechabites enter the temple of Baal to ensure there is no-one accidentally trapped there who shouldn't be there. This is an indication that the executions are carried out carefully. No-one is killed by Jehu who is not under an execution order of the Lord, and he ensures Jehonadab is there to certify this also. He then gets all the Baal priests the hidden and special garments that are stored away in secret places in Samaria, so that everyone in the temple can dress appropriately to their paganism, and so that all the trappings of this evil paganism are there in that one place.

We do not know how big this temple was, nor how many people were here, but it may have been several hundred, or even as many as a thousand or more packed in here.

He has eighty selected men for the task of execution of the Baal worshippers. They are told to surround the place, and then enter it in such a way that none escape, and they are told bluntly that if one escapes the man who let him escape will die in his place. By packing the people into the temple it will make it easier to kill them, and harder for these pagans to defend themselves if they wished to. At the signal the soldiers begin the slaughter, and the carnage and sounds coming from that evil place must have been terrible.

Having killed all the people, they take up their bodies and throw them out into the town waste dump, and then take out all the idols and implements of paganism from the temple and destroy them thoroughly. The temple then is made into a public toilet and was such until the writer of this section recorded these words. Baal worship will be well and truly dead for many years in the north, but sadly Jehu will not return to the Temple worship in Jerusalem. His obedience is not complete and so evil begins again. Satan is malicious and tenacious, and even the slightest disobedience by God's servants will be used by him to regain power and evil influence over God's people. Follow through 100% pastor!

**Verses 29 – 36.** The golden calf worship that Aaron had begun at Mt Horeb remained the religion of Israel, and Jehu didn't take the opportunity to eliminate it thoroughly, and return to godly worship in the south at Solomon's Temple. Now he had the opportunity, for he has killed all the house of David except the ones who have survived as children in the palace there. He could have restored worship and eliminated the evil queen mother in Jerusalem, Athaliah, and even re-united the two kingdoms. It was all possible, and the Mosaic Law was there to be applied with blessing as the promise if he did so. Leviticus 26:40-46, Deuteronomy 28:1-15. He does not!

He receives the Lord's promise, possibly from Elisha or Jehonadab, that because he has thoroughly eliminated the Baal worship, that his sons will rule for four generations over Israel, but because he will not follow the Mosaic Law, but opts for the compromise liberal religion of the golden calf, there will be the judgements that the Mosaic law told the people they would face for such things. Leviticus 26:1-39. This man goes so far, and then pull back, and God has no pleasure in us if we pull back from total obedience. Habakkuk 2:4-5, Luke 9:62, Hebrews 10:38.

The king of Syria launches attacks upon them all along their borders and eats away at their borders, taking towns and cities there. All of the East bank is lost in the reign of Jehu. His rule had started there in Ramoth Gilead but he sees these very places he fought in as a soldier lost to his kingdom when he becomes king. The reason for his defeats is his refusal to move away from the golden calf worship and restore true worship of the Lord.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Judgement is God's "strange work", but it is His work and He does it thoroughly. Jehu is His means of achieving the total elimination of the house of Ahab for all the evils they have done and to ensure they are unable to do any more. We are very soft and sentimental towards evil in today's world, and we need to remember that the Lord is not, and He is going to judge this work. Holiness before the Lord is a requirement for men, and those who do not pay attention to this demand of God will pay a heavy price. Be holy pastor, and teach holiness and personal accountability. 1 Corinthians 3:17ff, Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 1:22, 1 Timothy 2:8, 1 Peter 1:15-16, Jude 20, Revelation 4:8.

2. When taking action against evil people who have caused mischief in the church a pastor must move quickly and be ruthless in their elimination of them if they reject the Gospel message. Those who make merchandise of God's people are to be eliminated from the church. If not saved and transformed they are to be seen for what they are – the enemy's spies and agents to rob the Lord's people. Cast them out as Paul did. 1 Timothy 1:18-20.

3. In the midst of all evil places there are good people who serve the Lord faithfully. In the midst of the carnage of Jehu's judgement of Ahab's house these people are safe. God can keep His people safe and will do so. Our task is to do what is required of us and relax in the Lord's hands. Let us do today what we are called to do and leave the results in the Lord's hands.

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 11****INTRODUCTION**

We could head this chapter up, “the grand-mother from hell”, and we would be absolutely accurate. This woman Athaliah was far more ruthless for power than any other woman I have ever studied in the ancient world. She leaves the last Cleopatra well behind, and Catherine the Great, and Madame Mao in our own day. Many in history have been corrupt in their search for power, and have used sex, murder, theft and fraud, but this woman was almost pure in her evil. She was worse than her mother Jezebel (she is also called a daughter of Omri – for he is the founder of the house of Ahab), for even her mother never slew her own grand-children!

The parallel passage is 2 Chronicles 22-23. Read this passage now. Notice that the account of the death of Ahaziah is different from that in 2 Kings, as the Chronicler records that he was slain after hiding in Samaria, and the king’s body was removed for burial from there. There was no way a king of Judah could be “hidden” in the capital of Israel in this day! The two accounts may however be harmonised by the removal of the body of Ahaziah to Samaria first, and its being hidden there, before it is released for burial in Jerusalem later. This would be a useful thing for Jehu as it would delay the arrival of the news of his death considerably, and give him more time to consolidate power. Samaria is also on one of the major roads from Megiddo to Jerusalem and so would be a logical stopping point, but if Ahaziah was alive at the time, he was either dying, or about to be killed.

The Chronicler is telling us something about this event that the author of Kings has omitted because it doesn’t matter to his account, but it would appear that a textual corruption has interfered with what the Chronicler originally said. There are places where an historic scribal error confuses a text, and this appears to be one of these. These are few, and we can marvel at the preservation of the text of scripture down the centuries, that not one scribal error or variation occurs in any place where a doctrinal issue is at stake.

The Lord has preserved His revelation to us, so that flawed men could not hinder the process of salvation or sanctification, so that, although some passages exist where scribal error makes it difficult to know exactly what occurred, in any place where this occurs the variation is insignificant. The original record was a perfect one, as the authors of scripture were Holy Spirit inspired, and it is amazing to me that so few copyist errors were made, as scribes through the centuries were not necessarily so Holy Spirit filled as they laboriously copied manuscripts by hand hour after hour.

Satanic attack has been seriously concentrated upon the scriptures, their copying, and their proclamation, and it is a testimony to God’s preserving power that Satan has had so few victories over the scribes through the centuries, and none of them count doctrinally. In this one before us, I don’t mind whether Ahaziah dies of wounds in Megiddo or Samaria, or whether the body of Ahaziah was hidden in Samaria for a time, or went directly to Jerusalem; do you pastor? Do not ever major on the minor issues – he dies under judgment – don’t miss that fact, then move forward, lest you do.

This is a passage however where we have a minor textual problem and we must accept it and sit with it, not try to explain it away, but see it for what it is, a matter of minor significance in itself, but a pointer to something far more important. Satan only attacks a portion of scripture which is teaching something important about Him. In this case he has only been able to confuse a minor point about the route a body took to burial, but don’t be sidetracked by this, but look at the whole chapter before us here and you will discover why Satan attacked this otherwise obscure section of the Word.

In the passage before us we have a very serious attack upon the Lord’s people and plan by the enemy. Through the evil queen Athaliah, Satan attempts to murder all the living descendents of David who could claim the Davidic throne. This was a direct satanic assault upon the line of the Messiah, but the Lord intervenes to stop its success. It is interesting that Satan has directed his attack on the clarity of the text at this point also, as he will always try to distract us from the more important issues regarding his policies, and confuse us as to what he is actually doing. The work of Athaliah is in a direct line of satanic attack upon the line of the Messiah stretching from demonic attack before the flood, through to the Pharaoh of the Exodus, right to Adolf Hitler in our own day.

**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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 3.** There is a six year reign of terror in Judah under this evil woman Athaliah. This woman hears of the death of her son, and unlike the normal mother, she does not grieve for him, she acts to seize power for herself, and eliminate anyone who might even have the smallest claim to the throne. The author of Chronicles has already told us, 2 Chronicles 22:1, that a raiding party of Arabian forces had killed all Ahaziah's older brothers in battle, so that he, as a younger one, was the oldest remaining, and became king as a result.

From the slaughter of Jehu, we know that 42 of the other siblings, and possibly nephews, of the king, were eliminated before the news of the death of Ahaziah reached the city of Jerusalem. Athaliah may not have many to eliminate, but many of those marked to die may be quite young, as the survivor of the massacre is described later as being rescued from the nursery. This is a slaughter of the innocents as barbarous as the slaughter of the children around Bethlehem by Herod the Great many centuries later. Matthew 2:16-21.

The children are being kept in the evil queen's very living quarters, and Jehosheba's theft of the baby Joash is amazing, and her hiding of him for six years in the Temple precincts, right by the palace is also amazing. She is referred to as the sister of Ahaziah, and so she may be the daughter of Athaliah, and she certainly knew the depth of her mother's evil. This woman Athaliah is a good candidate for the model for the evil witches of Walt Disney's movies.

It is here that we realise why the author of Chronicles gives us the additional detail (which a later scribe under satanic attack obscures!) about the hiding of either a dying Ahaziah, or his body, in Samaria for a time. Jehu needed and uses this time, but also Athaliah uses this time delay in the announcement of his death to execute all who could claim the throne. She has ensured that all the living children with a claim to the throne are in her own quarters ready to be dealt with quickly, and when she hears the news of her son's death she executes her plan.

In some way the nurse of the baby Joash hears, or it may be the priesthood hears of the plan to execute the children, and two women take action to defeat the evil queen's plan. In the midst of this evil palace, this sister of the dead king, Jehosheba, who is married to a senior priest, acts with the wet nurse, to save a child who she believes can be the next king. With a harem for most kings in this time, and a young king on the throne, there would be many babies in the nursery at the one year point in Ahaziah's reign.

Older children would be known by name, easily recognisable, and sought for execution by name, but the babies were probably "just babies" to the evil queen and the guards who did her bloody work. It is one of these babies, little Joash, that Jehosheba steals from the harem nursery, with the support of the wet nurse.

How is this possible under the eyes of the guards of the queen? There are many babies, and nurses would share their care, and the time delay between the theft of little Joash, and the entry of the killers of the children may only have been minutes. It may be that Joash was the only one completely and deeply asleep, or that the wet nurse made sure he was deeply asleep, and so he was able to be bundled up and hidden under Jehosheba's or the nurse's clothing. They could regularly enter and leave this area without anyone noticing, as both belonged in the palace, and if they didn't appear to be carrying anything in their hands/arms, then no-one of the guards would be counting babies afterwards.

Royal women, and wet nurses were not body searched in this day, so they were able to achieve their result if the baby was asleep and under their clothing. There is great drama here. Once again the deliverance of this little boy is a close run thing. Why Joash and not another? We don't know the answer to this question, but Jehosheba is guided by the Lord in some way, and she gets the boy who is going to be the king who restores faith to Judah, and this young woman and her husband dedicate themselves to his godly upbringing in absolute secrecy.

The evil queen executes her plan soon after Joash is removed and all the nursery is covered in the blood of the other children. Where are those children now? We have God's Word on this through David, in 2 Samuel 12:15-23; the children are in heaven with the Lord. Their brief lives are not wasted, and in heaven we will see rejoicing all such as died this way at the hands of those who do Satan's work. It is then and only then that we will hear their stories and rejoice, with any of our questions about their fate answered.

**Verses 4 – 8.** The reign of Athaliah is so awful that the writer draws a veil over it here, as does the writer of the Chronicles of Judah. This is not sexism as some modern foolish feminist commentators have argued; this woman was evil enough to murder a nursery full of children, so not much positive action is going to follow from such a woman! She reigned for six to seven years, and by that point the Royal Regiment of Guards is ready to rebel against her, but none see any Davidic candidate left alive to replace her, and none want the dynasties of Israel to rule over Judah. There is a sense of hopelessness and resignation, but behind the scenes the godly priest Jehoida and his wife Jehosheba have been waiting for the right moment to announce the saving of Joash.

That day comes in the seventh year, and Jehoida gathers the military leadership of the nation into the temple and privately announces to them that a true son of David has survived the pogrom against his line. These key military leaders would have regularly entered and worshiped at the Temple, and it appears there was a formal Sabbath Parade every week, and it is this next regular parade that Jehoida will use to announce the new king's rulership. From this passage we can deduce that Athaliah had her own body guard in addition to the royal guards of the city who are called together by Jehoida. Her guards were probably the ones who slaughtered the children, and if they were pagans, like her, we can see why the godly men are ready to rebel against her and her mafia type organisation.

Jehoida must have been very sure of all these men's loyalty to the Davidic Line, and their hatred of Athaliah and all she stood for, as just one traitor amongst them, and all was lost forever. The Lord's hand was over this thing, and the timing was perfect, and Jehoida has been very thoughtful as to what needed to be done when the move against Athaliah is finally made. He is able to give the troops the best orders to follow because he has been thinking for several years about how to do this thing. This is still strange, given that they are the men who normally would give such orders, but they will take these orders from a priest, who has no military background.

When God prepares a man or woman for a great task, they will be tasked with thinking through their role and the roles of the others involved. A plan may be percolated for years in the mind before the Lord asks you to execute it in person. If there is a great matter to be done, then spend your time thinking through all the various ways it may be done, and allow the Holy Spirit to prepare a plan within you for the safe and thorough execution of it. Keep walking in the filling of the Holy Spirit pastor and you will be ready to do things in God's timing that you would not even think possible today.

Jehoida's plan involves using the normal three divisions of the guards, so each section remains under its experienced and able commanders. Normally two thirds of the royal guards of Jerusalem would be stood down, with time off, at any one time, and only one third would be on active duty. On this particular Sabbath Day, Jehoida calls for the third on duty to hold their watch and guard the palace entrances as will be expected of them, but for the other two thirds of the guard to enter the Temple of Solomon, where one third will be posted to hold the gate that leads to the palace and one third will be on guard over the young king in the Temple itself.

It would appear that he expected Athaliah would have her own troops that may attack these men holding the Gate, and may even get into the temple and try to kill the young king, and these men before him are tasked with putting a cordon of steel around the young king and killing anyone who comes too close. Jehoida expects both direct assault and assassination to be tried once the evil queen discovers that a child escaped her murderous slaughter of the rest of the family.

**Verses 9 – 12.** On the Sabbath appointed all the captains bring their men into the Temple as arranged, but they come without their weapons, and probably without their uniforms. The reasons for this are obvious, given the nature of the plan here. Had they drawn their uniforms and weapons from the Palace armoury the agents of Athaliah would have known a plot was afoot. When off duty, in time of external peace, these soldiers would be dressed in normal clothes and be unarmed; anything else would create suspicion of a plot.

They enter the Temple at the pre-arranged time, and receive from Jehoida the weapons that King David had laid up there nearly two centuries before. These would be a special arsenal that was laid up as a last defence for the Temple should the city be attacked. They cannot be offerings that have simply been laid there in piles, or the metal would have rusted and been useless. The weapons must have been kept in a good state through the previous years ready for this day. These weapons are issued and all the men are equipped. There may be several thousand men in this Royal Guard Regiment.

The first battalion of this regiment are on duty around the palace, the second is posted on the Gate to the Temple and on the wall, and the third battalion of this royal regiment is drawn up around the king and from one side of the temple to the other across the courtyard. In this day the line of battle was anywhere from three to sixteen deep, and so we have over 500 men in each battalion here. When all the battalions are drawn up in their places Jehoida brings in the young prince and crowns him as the king of David's line, and all the soldiers applaud. The way soldiers applauded was not to clap their hands however, as that would mean letting go their spears; they would clatter their spears against their shields. It is this tremendous noise that is heard in the royal palace next door.

**Verses 13 – 15.** From verse thirteen we can see that there were many of the leaders of the people invited to this crowning ceremony also, and their cheers for the new king are also heard by Athaliah. She enters the Temple Courtyard through the royal gateway. She will have been surrounded by her own guards, but she has made the same mistake her son made at Jezreel, and walked through her enemies and now her men are outnumbered and she is surrounded. In her satanically inspired arrogance she believed that her dominant presence would still the crowd and that she could regain order and then execute the conspirators by her sheer dynamic power, but she is “dead” wrong.

She sees the young king standing by the pillar of the Temple named after his ancestor Boaz. 1 Kings 7:21. The people do not stop rejoicing and the trumpeters do not stop their blowing of their shofars in rejoicing at the coronation of a true son of David. She tears her clothing in frustration and rage. Jehoida simply orders the Royal Guard to seize her and carry her outside the Temple walls, beyond the ranks (“ranges” in the KJV) of the amassed soldiers, and slay her there. Her blood is not to be shed in the Temple.

**Verses 16 – 21.** She is seized roughly and taken through the horse gate of the palace and it looks like she is slain in the stables outside the palace. Jehoida moves then immediately to get all the people to solemnly recommit to the Lord’s path for the nation’s life. The king, nobles, and the people all commit to serving the Lord as one body. Joash is only seven, and yet his oath is taken here, and that tells us that while those under twenty are not held accountable in the Exodus generation, Numbers 14:26-43, that a spiritual promise made by a minor here is taken as acceptable by the Lord, and the child enabled through the Holy Spirit to keep it before the Lord. Joash’s oath is bone fide and honoured.

Let us not be too quick at setting too high an age level for baptism or any other church function, for the Lord accepts Joash, and he quickly begins to take authority (initially under the guidance of Jehoida) and he will later rule alone in a godly manner. The people then head into the heart of Athaliah’s paganism and destroy the house of Baal she has built and the priest of Baal is slain by his altar. Having done this the Royal Guard takes the young king and brings him down to the Palace of the Davidic kings and sit him on the throne of David his ancestor. He is only seven but there is rejoicing in the land because God has delivered them from great evil.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Jehoida’s timing was perfect, and so must ours be in ministry. The right thing done at the wrong time will not get the results the Lord desires of us as His servants. We are to walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit and learn to be obedient with care and precision as to what we do and when we do it. Use preparation time for any great task as thinking and planning time. Be ready for any future tasking by giving thought to what the Lord appears to be preparing you to do, and so be fit, mentally alert and ready to execute the Lord’s plans.
2. Jehoida does not under-estimate the murderous malice of the evil queen. Often pastors today under-estimate the malice of the enemy against them and so do not plan as thoroughly against evil men as they should. Let us be careful of the servants of Satan for their malice is unchanged since these evil days we read of here.
3. Everyone in the plot of Jehoida does their duty with bravery and determination. They stand against the evil queen and she falls in her satanic arrogance. Let us do our duty before the Lord in what He has called us to do, and let us stand like Jehoida and oppose satanic evils where ever they are found in the church. Let us also remember that youth is no barrier to service, and that Holy Spirit led children may minister to adults. The only test to always be applied is that of Matthew 7; there must be godly fruit in the life for there to be godly service flowing from that person. Let us not despise youth, but seek what the Holy Spirit is doing and walk in God’s paths, even if children lead us.

**NOTES**

**CHAPTER 12****INTRODUCTION**

Little Joash (Jehoash) ruled well for as long as the godly old priest Jehoida was his advisor and guide through the decision making process of rulership. He ruled for as long as Solomon, which was normally a mark of God's favour, but sadly like Solomon, he went off the rails completely later in his life and he dies comparatively young, under God's judgement, around age 47. Initially, as a young man, he was guided by the old priest and he repaired the temple of Solomon, which had been used as a supply depot by the evil Athaliah for building materials for the temple to Baal. As we read these words, and the stories of the later kings, we marvel that the children of the people who stood with Solomon at the dedication of this great temple could have let its worship slide down hill as far as they did by the time the Lord allows it to be destroyed.

We are around 100 years now since the division of the kingdom, and only 125 years since the temple was dedicated. Pharaoh Shishak had stripped the temple's gold within three years of Solomon's death, but the short reign of Athaliah had seen its very building structure cannibalised for the building of the temple to Baal in Jerusalem, so that the repair work took many years to make good the damage done. (Joash ruled from circa 876 – 835 BC). The turning point in his reign appears to be the invasion of Hazael of Syria around the 840s, when Joash is forced to take all the gold that has been re-gathered into the temple treasury to buy the Syrians off, so that they leave the capital Jerusalem alone.

He appears to have had a crisis of faith around this point, possibly when he sees the destruction of the Syrians, and may have then questioned God. (I am giving him the benefit of the doubt in this matter, because the writer records his overall rating as "good", but the more I reflect upon his later actions the more I doubt the heart of this man). Even before that place of military humiliation however his revival of temple worship has been incomplete, and it may be that the apostasy of the nobles has already occurred by then. It is a crisis of faith that afflicts him and destroys his kingdom, and the same crisis will end our blessing also. Hebrews 11:1-3, 39 – 12:3.

The correct time order of events is problematic here. The impression we are given by our writer is that it is as if, early on in his reign he does what he is told, but does not go beyond Jehoida's words with any personal passion and commitment to the worship of the Lord God. It is this lack of passionate commitment to genuine worship that leads to his and the nation's judgement. His lack of total passion means that later in his reign he does not stop the murder of the faithful prophet Zechariah, who is actually Jehoida's son! We need to remember also, that for much of his reign the prophet Elisha is also active in the north as a preacher of the truth. King Joash had no excuse for his lukewarm faith.

Joash acts to rebuild the temple, but takes charge of the project only after twenty three years of corruption by the minor priests there. Why such a long period of delay when clearly things are not being done? There is a feeling here that a great deal is being left out of the story about this man by our writer, who clearly wants to praise this man as far as he can! Now our writer is obedient to the Holy Spirit, and so he is giving us a positive spin on this king, who could have been great, but the writer will indicate just how far away from this potential he had fallen when he tells of his death at the end of this chapter. He did what was "right", but he did not do enough, nor do it consistently to be great, and his religious compromise led to great evil. He is a picture of what the writer of Revelation will call Laodicean faith. Revelation 3:14-21.

This chapter forms the turning point for the history of Judah, and it vividly portrays the deep and ultimately fatal spiritual disease of the people of the south. This disease takes three forms. Firstly, they are addicted to their old patterns of worship on the high places, and thereby open themselves to the paganism of their neighbours as an alternative to the temple worship. Secondly they approach the temple and its formal worship as if it is a "good luck charm"; that while the temple stands they will be safe, and while they do the things required, that is all God requires. This leads to the third spiritual symptom of their fatal disease. They practise a legalistic religion rather than a passionate one. They hold back from whole hearted worship and obedience to the Lord and so fall short of what God demands of man, which is whole hearted worship. Pastors must mentor passionate faith – or the lukewarm faith of compromise will rob the church of power and ministry opportunity. Only passionate faith is biblical faith!

This man Joash was the victim of his own lukewarm attitude to religious faith, and he possibly had what I call a "lucky rabbit's foot" type religion. By this I mean, he believes in the temple as a "good luck charm", just as later generations would do, and if your faith is in a "good luck charm" you are baffled and offended when it fails to protect you from disaster. Jeremiah 7:1-11, 12-15, Matthew 22:42, 24:1-2. No building or ritualistic worship system will save us unless we are passionate about our worship of the Lord God who made us and saved us.

Joash has rebuilt/repared the temple and yet, as he sees it, the Lord allows the enemy Hazael into the land, and Hazael steals much of the money and golden treasure that would have re-beautified the temple, and Joash questions God over this. Our faith however is not meant to be a good luck charm, nor focused upon things, but it is to be a living and passionate relationship of worship focused towards the one true God. It is this very point that our writer is making; the Lord is seeking far more from His people than formal worship, for He wants their "whole hearted" worship. The events of this chapter and the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 24, will be referred to by the Lord Jesus Himself, and will also be referred to by several authors of the New Testament.

The historic events of this chapter are as significant to our own day as the spiritual and theological lessons of this chapter. The invasion of Hazael is a disaster for Judah and financially it nearly bankrupts the nation. King Joash saves

some gold back, and hides this from prying Syrian eyes, but a great deal has been lost by this point, and very little of Solomon's treasures are left in Jerusalem, if anything. As we approach in our own time, the days when the temple treasures from the Roman sacking of Jerusalem in 70AD will likely be recovered to rebuild the third temple, we need to remember these details.

Don't be shocked by my words here, for a temple of some sort will be rebuilt on the Temple Mount for the Great Tribulation period, for the Bible teaches that the Antichrist will come to that temple and try to centre world religion around it. It will likely occur after the invasion described in Ezekiel 38-39 has occurred and devastated Arab and Jewish areas. As we read this chapter and the rebuilding of the temple, let us remember the future of this most contentious of all sites in the world.

The temple treasures stored at Rome after the temple's destruction in 70 AD were then captured by the Vandals in the fifth century of our era when they sacked Rome, and are most likely buried in Southern France, where the final major Vandal capital was. If they are not there, then they are hidden in the basements of the Vatican. They will, I believe, be returned to Israel at some future point, and be the impetus to rebuild the Temple, and it will occur with Arab support at that time! The temple can be rebuilt without affecting the mosques on the site, as the site of the ZHoly of Holies is opposite the sealed Western Gate.

It is important to remember that while all of the items that were looted by the Romans, and then taken by the Vandals, were from within the second temple, some were items that came from the first one, for all the holy items that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC were returned to the Jews by Cyrus the Great in 535 BC. Ezra 1:6-11. While the ordinary treasures of Solomon's house were looted early by Pharaoh Shishak and others, the items associated with worship were apparently left for the temple to function, and these, including the golden lampstand and other sacred items, may have survived the centuries to be carried off to Rome and then onwards from there.

Nothing sacred in Judaism was ever cast away or sold. Worn out worship items were either re-made and re-used, or they were laid aside in sacred storage. The surviving contents of the old tabernacle were probably stored in a room above the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple, and even old manuscripts from modern synagogues are not destroyed when worn out, but are laid aside in holy retirement in what are called Genizahs. The most ancient found so far is the Cairo Genizah\*, and it contained many ancient manuscripts. Google this and study it, and then reflect upon this Jewish tradition of storage of sacred items, and reflect upon what would happen to worn out metal sacred items used in worship.

Also at this point, Re-read the commentary on 1 Kings Chapter 6 where I discuss the items in this great new temple and the fate of the items from the old tabernacle. I believe that many of these holy items may have survived the millennia, and their rediscovery would enable a new temple to be rededicated, and the Lord tells us, that it will be. Matthew 24:15. The events of the reign of this king Joash are very significant for our own time, theologically, historically, and prophetically, and the events of his day have much to teach us about our own.

**2 KINGS 12:1-21**

**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'. 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.**

## **REFLECTIONS**

**Verses 1 – 3.** Joash is only a young boy of seven when he begins to reign and he listens to the old High Priest in his first years and trusts the priesthood for the administration of what he wishes to be done in the temple area. The writer records the overall verdict upon his rule, that he did right, but that he didn't follow through far enough on one matter especially. He did not deal with the worship on the old "High Places" of the land. It is his compromise on these matters that will lead to the condemnation of the prophet Zechariah later in his reign, and his on-going refusal to act, and his support for the nobles who wanted their idolatry, that will lead to the prophet's murder. 2 Chronicles 24:15-24. The writer of the Chronicles, giving the priestly version of the history, very strongly blames this king for the murder of Zechariah, although our writer does not directly, but certainly drops many hints that his weakness on this theological issue led to great evil and his own murder.

This murder of Zechariah is a crucial event in the history of Judah and a watershed event on the slow slide into evil that they allow to occur. It is the murder of Zechariah that the Lord Jesus mentions as one of the reasons why the nation will experience judgement again, for they have not learned from history and are about to murder others who stand for the truth. Matthew 23:34-39. Within months of Jesus words, He has been murdered, Stephen follows Him, and James the brother of John also. It is this murder of Zechariah that Stephen also appears to have in mind when he speaks to the Sanhedrin, Acts 7:51-52, and it is Zechariah's martyrdom that the writer to the Hebrews identifies as a great example of standing for the truth in troubled times, and the cost that it has entailed down the centuries. Hebrews 11:37.

These "high places" that the people so loved to worship upon had been ancestral worship sites, and were bone fide places of worship until the temple was built, but from that time on true worship was to be centred in the temple at Jerusalem, and all the old sites were declared redundant. Burning incense anywhere else was now disobedience to the clear command of the Lord that all such practises were to cease. Those who disobeyed the clear direction of God and continued in the old ways were open therefore to religious seduction by our spiritual enemy, for their heart was not obedient to the Lord's clear direction to change their habits.

When a spiritual practise is declared redundant, it is to be laid aside, and while until that point it has been practised by godly men and women, all who follow this way there after that point are in error. This is a hard challenge, for old habits die hard, and many feel a hankering for the old and familiar, but the Lord calls us to be actively obedient to Him, and to be forward focused, not backward looking. If we look backwards we will stumble on the path of the Lord.

When the Mosaic Law was laid aside by the institutions of the Church Age, many of the Jewish believers found it hard to let go of their legalistic practises and were led astray into great evil, just as the people of Joash's day. Romans 8:1-4, Galatians 3:10-19, Hebrews 7:11-12. The danger is still with us today, and legalism must be opposed strongly.

**Verses 4 – 6.** Note from this section two things; firstly the royal treasury is empty, and secondly the priests have been corrupt. The reign of Athaliah and the defeats by many enemies over the years has run the royal treasury down to the bottom and in the Temple things are not much better. Even godly Jehoida has not been able to stop his men having their fingers in the plate! It is a reminder that corruption is not ever a thing to be taken lightly, and strong systems need to be in place in every church to ensure that no-one has the opportunity to be dishonest for long before they are caught and eliminated from the fellowship.

This evil was present even in the Lord's own circle, with Judas having his hands in the offering box all along. We are not to trust people with anything precious, let alone with money, until they have thoroughly proved themselves honest! Proven faithfulness in handling money is one of the main things required of any man who is to hold church office, and even trustworthy men are to be audited and supervised. Anyone who is offended at an audit is to be immediately dismissed as a rejecter of authority and most likely corrupt. All should rejoice to be proved honest – and only the dishonest man hates audit. John 2:24-25, 12:6, 1Timothy 3:3-8, 6:10, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:2.

The challenge to the priesthood was a very clear one from the king to Jehoida, and then to the priesthood. As it was a holy site the priests were initially tasked with both the collection of monies and the repairing of the holes in the walls of the temple and the places where buildings had fallen down due to ill repair. They were to take all the monies that came into the temple and they were to assign it to the various needed tasks, and their own salaries, but the repair work was to be completed.

Now we are told in 2 Chronicles 24:15-16 that Jehoida lived to an age of 130 years, and this means he was over ninety when the young king takes the throne. He is venerated and is a great counsellor, but clearly was not up to the task of overseeing his men and ensuring they were doing all they could to hasten the work on the Temple. In the twenty-third year of Joash's reign the priests have still not finished the repairs and many major problems have not even begun! It is a disgrace and the king tells them so. His delay in acting until this point is an indication of his own slackness towards the things of God however.

**Verses 7 – 12.** The king bluntly tells them that the collection of the money is being taken out of their direct control. He stops short of accusing them of fraud and corruption, but they accept his control of the free will offerings coming into the temple, and this concession tells us that they clearly felt guilty. They could not argue that they had any other excuse for their failure, other than slack systems, and thieving members of the priesthood.

Things have not changed over time! Two Catholic Priests in Florida were just convicted last week of stealing over \$600,000-00 to feed their lavish life style over the years. Both men were in their sixties and had kept up their stealing from the offerings until they were caught. Do not be fooled by a clerical collar believer, for corruption is everywhere, and systems must be strong in churches to protect the Lord's money from the devils people, whether they wear dog collars or not! The people of Judah had not been giving as they should have been because they probably suspected fraud, and so after the king finally acts they give full and complete offerings and the offering box is filled quickly.

Old Jehoida takes a large wooden box himself and bores a hole in it for people to place money in, and then he gets it bolted to the outer wall of the Inner Court of the Temple, by the main entry gate to approach the altar. This way the people can give their free will offerings before they enter and even meet a priest, and any money given to priests would be publicly seen placed by them in the box. He is ensuring that the priesthood has no opportunity for dishonesty. I believe this old man will have wept many tears as he did this, for he was facing a truth about his own priesthood that would have been hard to confront. He had kept a young king safe from an evil queen, but he had harboured thieves amongst his own men!

The king's officials are amazed at the amount of money that is collected over a short period, and the extent of the priests thieving is disclosed. As noted above, it may also be that the people were also holding back on their offerings as they suspected something was corrupt. The king's officials take charge and collect the money into bags and they are assigned to the builders and masons, who immediately get moving on the repairs. A significant amount of timber and stone is required, and this tells us that there was a great deal of damage done to the temple under Athaliah's reign.

**Verses 13 – 16.** There was not enough money given to make a completely new set of implements for the priest's use during worship services and sacrifices, but there was enough to ensure the temple was repaired. This may be a clue to the fact that Solomon's golden equipment has been long gone, or that it has survived, is battered, but is unable to be replaced. We still confront a mystery about the implements that survive the destruction of 586BC, as to whether they go back to Moses, or Solomon's day, or came from quite late in the first temple period. The workmen who rebuilt the temple were (unlike the priests) financially trustworthy, and no accounts of their time and work were kept, nor were itemised accounts rendered by these men, for they all behaved with absolute integrity and did what they were asked to do.

The entire repair work, once it was taken over by the king's officials went on without any problems and the workmen were absolutely faithful and trustworthy. This is a great credit to these ordinary craftsmen, and a real standing rebuke to the priesthood. The corruption of the priesthood may also have contributed to the growth of underground paganism through this period also.

One of the great causes of sadness for true pastors is seeing corrupt pastors bringing the Lord's name and work into disgrace by their behaviours, and so driving good people further away from the church because of the corruption and hypocrisy they see there. The writer records that the priests did keep that which they were entitled to keep and lists the offerings that provided their upkeep and their family's sustenance in return for their temple service. These offerings were in effect their "pay" and were legitimately kept to support their families back home.

**Verses 17 – 18.** The writer records that it is around this time that Hazael came up and attacked the southern kingdom of Judah. He began by going down the coastal road and then circling around the capital, moving first against Gath and then moving up towards Jerusalem. By doing this he cut off the possibility of any relieving army moving up from the south. It was a conquest invasion by Hazael, and he was brutal, so desperate measures were called for. Clearly Joash had not been militarily prepared for this eventuality, and so he had to buy him off from his purposed destruction of Jerusalem.

All the available monies left in temple and palace is gathered together, and all the golden and silver gifts given to the temple by the previous four kings are all given to the Syrian tyrant. He is allowed to have this victory, and the people of the south are allowed by the Lord to experience this humiliation. Foreign invasion of the promised land was a sure sign of divine discipline for Judah, indeed it meant advanced discipline; the fourth cycle of discipline, where there were only five! Refer to the passage in Leviticus 26. The religious and moral state of the nation was clearly quite poor in these latter days of Joash.

The reason for the invasion appears to be, from the priestly Chronicles account, the growing compromises in the religious area that Joash was allowing, and even encouraging. He was a pluralistic monarch, happy to worship in the temple himself, but not too worried about the activities of his nobles. If they preferred paganism then he was happy with their honesty and supported their choices. He did not want the "fanaticism" of Zechariah and considered him a dangerous fundamentalist. When this great prophet was stoned to death, it was either with Joash's support and encouragement, or at least his passive approval.

Pause here and reflect upon the celebration of pluralism in our world today. We salute and applaud such monarchs and rulers today, for we have swallowed the devil's lie that toleration and pluralism is the best path for mankind. While

toleration suits believers in dangerous places it opens the door for religious evils to be perpetrated in our nations without any action being able to be taken. Indeed in some places nations have published so called “hate laws” that make it an offence to even preach against another person’s evil belief system, and this sort of law opens the door to the degeneracy of the later days of Joash.

NOTE: there are three prophets named Zechariah in this time period 850 – 500 BC. This man is our first prophet we know of named Zechariah, then there is a second in the reign of Uzziah in the 820s – 790s. The third prophet named Zechariah is the author of the prophetic book named after him and he lives around 520 BC, and encourages the exiles to build the Second Temple.

**Verses 19 – 21.** The reason the writer of our history has left so much out is that he cannot say much more without running this man down, and he doesn’t want to do that, for the story speaks for itself. He also knows that the full story was available to people of his day in the Chronicles of the kings of Judah, which may have been a far bigger book than our present book called Chronicles. The Chronicle writer is very clear that the king is murdered because of his part in the murder of Zechariah. 2 Chronicles 24:23-27.

The off hand way both authors tell of this king’s murder in his late forties tells us about this king’s last years, and the justice of the Lord’s execution of him for the slaying of the prophet Zechariah. He is the victim of his own officers and is murdered in the fortress of David, the Millo. Not much is said of the plotters, or of the burial of this king. He is the man who could have achieved such great things, and had the open door before him to do this, but fell well short of the standards God required.

Joash lived, delivered by the Lord, but he slipped backwards, and failed his God, murdered a good man, and was murdered, and so he died, and was buried. All of us come to this last place, and the best verdict of the Lord over us is to be sought. Let us crave the “well done, good and faithful servant”, and not the fate and eternal verdict over this king. He was a good man, and ruled well most of the time, but he paid the price for his lukewarm faith.

In this life we are, either growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord our God and expanding our service for Him, or we are sliding downhill into carnality and apostasy. This king shows us that wasting time and spiritual compromise are simply not good options for those who seek to serve the Lord. Matthew 25:21-23, Revelation 3:14-21.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. Clinging to the “old ways” can be spiritually seductive and very dangerous to the church’s life and witness. The biggest danger to the modern church is being lukewarm in spiritual matters, and that is not ever remedied by returning to the Legalism of the Mosaic period. Let us heed the terrible warnings of history from the period of Joash, and see how early compromise with old habits led to paganism and finally to the murder of a great prophet. Let us move forward, and not look back to past ways that are declared past and gone. Let legalism be rejected as a false path and let us preach the truth of the grace standard of living from Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews! Let us walk in grace and Holy Spirit power, not limp along the old path of legalism.

2. Let us guard the Lord’s money in the church. We need tough financial systems of accountability in churches for the receipt, counting, banking, and reporting of all monies. Anyone in any organisation who does not want an audit is a crook! Be very suspicious of anyone who panics when they are audited, and ensure that church accounts are audited often, and that all the people see that things are honest. We are guardians of the Lord’s monies, and we are accountable to those who gave it and to the One for whose glory they gave it. Let us be very serious in this matter, for the Lord’s people will withhold their giving if they believe there is corruption. Corruption is the devil’s work, and so let us guard against such dangerous attacks by the enemy upon the work of the Lord amongst men.

3. Let us behave in business like the workmen of the temple. Let our “yes” be yes and our “no” be no! Matthew 5:33-37. As believers and as pastors we have a solemn obligation before the Lord to be men and women of our word, standing for truth in the midst of a lying generation. Let us be people of the truth, and let us rebuke the lying practises of our day covered by the evil lawyers who speak of “reasonable business practises” when the truth is it is fraud and corruption. Let us remember the financial corruption of the banks exposed in 2007-2012, and not trust in the deviousness of men.

4. We are called to be “fundamentalists” in our faith, and hold the fundamental truths of our historic faith, and not allow anyone to preach error in opposition to the clear truth of scripture. Jude 3. Let us be sure of the truths of the Word of God and let us preach them clearly, and not let the word “fundamentalist” as it is presently applied to terrorists put us off from holding the truth in power.

### **NOTES**

**CHAPTER 13****INTRODUCTION**

The rulership of the two kings named Joash is the turning point of Israel and Judah's history. As we saw in the last chapter, the slow slide into fatal paganism begins with toleration of religious practises that God has replaced, and continues with open rejection of God's Word, and then will follow all the evils of open paganism, even to the murder of God's spokesmen. This will become the pattern for both nations in the next two hundred years, with the murder of Isaiah, and the kidnapping and death in exile of Jeremiah. This chapter covers the overview of the key events in the lives of the kings Jehoahaz and Joash of the northern kingdom, and then details the death from old age of Elisha. It also identifies God's certification of his role and power, even after his death through the miracle of a resuscitation of a dead man in Elisha's tomb.

This chapter is the continuation of the chronicle of the grace and mercy of God towards the sinful kings of the north, for when they sought deliverance from the Lord, He granted them the answer to their prayers. These men do not return to the Lord and serve the Lord in spirit and in truth, but when they do pray, their genuine prayers are answered. These men are sent prophets, and they have the Word of God. Our writer is clearly identifying that they stand without excuse before their maker and deliverer. At times we will find that we cannot save anyone, but our task may be like the prophets of old, to ensure that none perish with any excuse before the Lord, for they have heard truth plainly spoken.

This and later chapters remind us that God's work of revelation amongst men has two objectives; the first is the salvation of those who will respond, and the second is the definite condemnation and judgement of those who will not. The truth sets free those who love the truth, but it forms the very ground of condemnation for those who hate the truth. John 6:63-68, 8:32-36, 10:10, 12:47-48, 15:18-21, Revelation 20:10-15.

As we have seen many times in previous chapters, our writer is also making the equally strong point to us throughout his work; that the Lord seeks for men to worship Him in spirit and in truth, with all their hearts. Formal acknowledgement of the truths of theology is not good enough for the salvation of man, for the devils acknowledge the truths about God and they are not saved by their knowledge. James 2:19.

God seeks whole hearted worship and transformed lives from those who hear and believe His truth. Saving faith is passionate faith. Saving faith is transforming faith, and it will always work out in the person's life with holy living and joyful service of the Lord. Half hearted faith and worship will always lead to apostasy or hypocrisy over time. 1 Kings 11:2-9, 15:3, 1 Chronicles 28:9, 2 Chronicles 6:14, 11:16, Mark 3:5, Luke 16:15, Romans 5:5, Hebrews 3:8-15.

Our historian is drawing the contrast between the two types of kings in Israel's history; those who whole-heartedly worship and serve the Lord their God, and those who compromise with the truth and then harden their hearts against Him. If men will but fully acknowledge their God and Saviour, and worship and serve Him in truth with all their hearts, then they will be blessed in time and eternity.

If men however walk away from the Lord their God, then they will be judged as surely as there is a God in heaven who seeks to bless them. Judgement is God's "strange work", Isaiah 28:21, but He will judge evil to protect the innocent, but well before that day, through His preachers and prophets, He seeks every means to turn man from this path of judgement. Psalms 67:1-7, Hebrews 6:9-15.

**2 KINGS 13:1-25**

**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. **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 shouldst 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. 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.

## REFLECTIONS

**Verses 1 – 2.** I will not make comment upon the difficulties with the dating of the time periods of the rule of the various kings, except to make the following observation. In the modern world we think of reigns of kings, or the government of elected rulers in terms of specific times, but this is not the way of thinking of the ancient world at all. Co-regencies were common, whereby the son was an assistant monarch through the last years of his father's reign, often operating as the Chief of Staff, capital city governor, or senior field general (as Nebuchadnezzar, and later Belshazzar) in the last years of their father's reigns. The best attempt to make sense of the apparently otherwise conflicting dates and reign times is that of Keil and Delitzsch on page 189-190 of their commentary upon the books of Kings, and I refer all who wish to clarify this matter to these pages for study.

In our study I want us to focus upon the spiritual points our writer is making and not get side tracked into details we cannot be sure of given the time frame of history we are working in and the scarcity of external data. We cannot be sure of absolute dates for these men, but we can be sure of the verdict of history upon these kings, and so let us focus upon understanding the things that flow from this.

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu begins to reign in Samaria in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Joash of Judah. In the very year that Joash begins to take charge of the Temple repairs this northern monarch takes the throne, but the opportunity to re-unite the worship of the two kingdoms in Jerusalem is lost. What an opportunity Jehoahaz had, for the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple was the chance for him to return his people to godly worship. He does not do this, but continues with the calf worship that Jeroboam started all the years before. He hardens his heart into the now habitual northern paths of carnality and apostasy.

**Verses 3 – 6.** The judgement of the FOURTH CYCLE OF NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE that sits now upon the northern kingdom until its end, less than 120 years after this time, is the judgement of continual war, and while temporary victories are given at times, the slide downhill has begun now in earnest. The last chance for the northern kingdom will however not come until the very last moment. God will speak to them in His Word and again and again through His prophets until the last days, but they harden their hearts against the truth. The message we see in this book before us is that while they live there is hope for them, but the day comes when it is too late for them. The love, grace and mercy of God is strong towards them, as it is towards our selves, but there is a time limit to the opportunity each man is given.

Even though this king continued in the calf worship, when he experienced greatest distress, and prayed to the Lord God alone, he was heard and the Lord answered his prayer for assistance through a military saviour who is not mentioned by name here. Even though they were delivered, the pagans of the north attributed their deliverance to their "saviour" rather than seeing that it was God who sent him, and so they continued in their apostasy.

**Verses 7 – 10.** The Syrians were victorious over Israel and appear to have forced a demobilisation upon them. The king of Israel was only allowed fifty horsemen and ten chariots as his own personal body guard, and 10,000 men as his entire army, when previously he would have mustered over 100,000. This is much what happened to defeated Germany after World War 1, and to Japan after World War 2. The Syrians had seriously defeated them in all battles fought and this is the total number of surviving soldiers from all who stood against the Syrians over the years.

This king reigned seventeen years only over Israel before he dies young and his son Joash of Israel reigns. He will also have only a short reign of sixteen years before his early death. He will however be offered the opportunity of great victory over the Syrians by the dying Elisha, but will illustrate by his response why his house and this entire northern kingdom is doomed.

**Verses 11 – 14.** All the years of his rulership he fought with the tribe of Judah to the south, even though the real enemy was the Syrian nation to the north. He refused to face the spiritual issue of the calf worship, but continued with this sin of Jeroboam as all the others before him had. Errors become entrenched over time. As time goes on an

historic error is harder and harder to correct, and it is easier and easier to excuse it as a “traditional” practise. It is this warning that is written so clearly to us from these chapters here; let us correct errors, for as every day goes onwards they become harder and harder to deal with.

Elisha dies in the last years of Joash’s reign. Notice the words of Joash as he visits the dying prophet. This is a man who has rejected the words and worship of the prophet and yet honours him with polite and fake passionate praise. He honours the truth with his lips, but his life is unchanged, and it is that which God requires. Isaiah 29:13, Joel 2:12-14, Matthew 15:1-11. Many people will turn out to honour a great preacher at their funeral, but these same politicians will have ignored his preaching while he lived.

**Verses 15 – 19.** King Joash had greeted the old prophet by using the same phrase that Elisha had used when he saluted Elijah after he has seen Elijah leave this earth. 2 Kings 2:12. The phrase was a formal acknowledgement of the presence of the angels of God with the prophet, and that he was God’s messenger. The words have no meaning whatsoever on the lips of this king but they sound spiritual. This man is a fake, a hypocrite, and his response to the directions of the old prophet will give evidence of that.

You will find many times in your life that carnal and even pagan people will use super-spiritual phrases in their communication with you and others in order to give the impression of genuine faith, but it is all a mirage. The more people say, “Praise the Lord” in a flippant way the more you need to be suspicious of them. **Jude 8-13.** Refer to a Commentary on Jude and study these verses as they give us the most direct warning of this sort of pious hypocritical nonsense.

Elisha orders the king to take his bow and arrows from his chariot. Every king of this day was trained to be an archer, for this was the weapon of the king, and was used for hunting and war. The king brings his full quiver and bow from his chariot into the house of the prophet. In initial obedience to the prophet he draws his bow, and the prophet places his hands upon the kings, and the first arrow flies out the prophet’s window towards the east. Elisha makes it clear that this arrow is the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and speaks of their deliverance from the bondage of Syria. The prophet gives a specific prophetic word about a coming battle at Aphek where Joash will be victorious over the Syrians.

Elisha then instructs the king to fire his arrows into the earthen floor of the prophet’s room. The king is obedient, but half-heartedly so, and only fires three arrows. The old prophet is very angry, for he knows what this slackness on Joash’s part means for Israel. He will have three victories only over the Syrians when he could have had so many more. Elisha wanted this man to empty his quiver of arrows into the earthen floor of his house. God seeks passionate obedience, not half-heartedness, and having sought small things by his slack obedience, he will receive only small things.

**Verses 20 – 21.** Elisha dies and is buried in a tomb where later others are buried. The writer recalls a story that has been passed down about his tomb. Shortly after the death of Elisha another man was being buried in the same tomb and because a Moabite raiding party is seen approaching, and will kill all the mourners, they just drop the body quickly into the tomb and run. The dropped body touches the body of Elisha and the dead man comes back to life and stands up in the tomb. He is resuscitated and rejoins his friends to finally die at a later time.

Given that the Moabites have been seen approaching this poor man had to run for his life just after having been brought back to life! This clear miracle is a sign to the people of the great power of Elisha and of God’s hand upon him and God’s testimony over his life witness. This story here formed the basis for one of the requirements of the Roman Catholic Church for the recognition of sainthood; that a miracle had to occur at the grave of the person who was thought to be a saint before their claim was acknowledged.

**Verses 22 – 25.** The writer reminds us that even though Israel deserved judgement they were not destroyed because of the Lord’s promise to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The sinister words are added however, “as yet”. They are blessed by association with their godly ancestors, but the promise of blessing is contingent upon their repentance and obedience, and the clock is ticking for them. Exodus 20:1-5. It is the reminder to us that the final judgement is coming to Israel because of their persistent sin, but the Lord is very patient with them and delays another 120 years before the final axe falls.

Even then the ten tribes are not “lost”, for their believing remnant survives by fleeing south, and there are members of each tribe alive in the days of the Lord, and possibly members of all the twelve tribes became believers and entered the early church. Acts 26:7, James 1:1. The chapter ends with the writer recording that Joash did indeed defeat the Syrians three times and he recovered all the cities that had been lost to Israel. Even with this blessing from the Lord however he did not return to the Lord in his worship or his works; he knew the truth but did not let the truth change him.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS**

1. It is not just the words of praise and worship that God requires of us, but transformed lives. The Lord seeks honesty, integrity, and whole hearted worship in association with holy living. Anything short of this is referred to in scripture as hypocrisy; as play acting with the truth. Let us preach and live as the men and women we should as the pastor-teachers of the living Word of God. Let us preach the truth about God’s requirement for transformed lives. 2 Timothy 2:1-10, 4:1-5.

2. Believer, be very wary of those who claim spiritual status and use super spiritual words, and yet whose lives are far from the Lord, and whose service is for the devil himself. Do not ever judge men and women by their words, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus, only by their lives (both their words and their works). Matthew 7:13-23.

3. How strong and bountiful/passionate is our faith? Do we obey the Lord as Joash obeyed Elisha, with half hearted responses? God calls us to passionate faith that goes for the first prize, not just runs to finish, or fights and beats the air! 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

The Lord calls us to be passionate winners, not just participants in this life. Believers, and pastors especially, please hear God's Word on this, and 'GO FOR IT' in this life. Serve the Lord with all your heart! Let us have the passionate faith of people who are held secure and empowered by their beliefs, not the dead faith of those who just "hold beliefs".

### **REFLECTION UPON GOD'S MERCY**

1. The Hebrew and Greek words for mercy carry the meanings of, gentleness, tenderness, and compassion towards others.

2. It is not a passive concern but an active one that works out to help the one in need of love and concern.

3. God is merciful towards us all. Exodus 33:19, Romans 9:15, Isaiah 13:18, Jeremiah 6:23, 21:7, cf. 1 Kings 8:50, Jeremiah 3:13, 42:12

4. God is rich in mercy towards us. Ephesians 2:4, James 5:11, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3.

5. People appealed to the Lord on the basis of his mercy towards the weak and needy. Matthew 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30, Mark 10:47, 48, Luke 17:13, 18:38, 39.

6. The "Good Samaritan's" acts were praised by the Lord as acts of mercy. Luke 10:37

7. When the rich man appealed to Abraham in the story of Dives, he appealed on the basis of mercy Luke 16:24.

8. As we are recipients of mercy so we must be merciful to others. Zechariah 7:9, 10, Luke 1:50.

9. Grace gives us that (blessing) which we don't deserve; mercy withholds that (judgement) which we do deserve.

### **BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY**

1. Definition – falling from the standard of living that the Lord calls us to and living at a lower level of belief, behaviour, and emotion. Living in a state of embarrassment at the gospel, thinking as an unbeliever would.

2. The Lord knows who are his, we don't. 2 Timothy 2:19. A backslider is out of fellowship, and may resemble an unbeliever in every way yet still be saved. They are like the prodigal son. Luke 15:3ff. These people are different (although they appear to be the same) to religious unbelievers. 2 Peter 2:1 -22, Jude 4 -13, 18, 19, 22.

3. The Lord desires these people to be restored. Matthew 18:12 -14, Luke 15:3 -32. In the Old Testament this message is also clear. Hosea 4:14-19, 11:7, 8, 14:1-4, Jeremiah 2:19, 3:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 22, 5:6, 8:5, 14:7, Jeremiah 31:22, 49:4.

4. Believers who are "offended" at the Word have failed to grow spiritually John 6:61 -63, Matthew 11:6, 1 Corinthians 10: 13, Matthew 13:21, Mark 4:17, John 16:1, Matthew 24:9, 10.

5. The disciples all were offended at the Lord at his death. Matthew 26:31, 33-35, cf. 67-75.

6. Falling from grace is another way of expressing backsliding. Colossians 1:23, Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 3:17. It means to fall from a place where you stand for grace and adopt an inferior way of living the Christian way of life, like legalism.

7. God disciplines the backslider, but their eternal security is secure. Hebrews 12:5 -13, 16, 17, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 1 Peter 1:4, 5, 2 Timothy 2:11- 13, John 1:12, Ephesians 1:13.

8. The Lord is able to keep us from falling, although we can walk away from his provision by following our pride rather than his truth. Jude 24. 1 Corinthians 10:11 -14, 1 Timothy 3:6, 7.

9. At the end of the church age the Lord prophesied that there would be a time of almost total backsliding on the part of the organised church. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1- 6, 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

10. The Lord warns all backsliders very directly in Revelation 2:5. No fruit for too long = sin unto death! John 15:1-5.

11. Backsliding and Recovery

Seven Steps Downwards

- a) Trifling with Sin Romans 13:14
- b) Yielding to Sin Romans 6:13
- c) Habitually Serving Sin 2 Peter 2:8
- d) Abandoning Ourselves to Sin Ephesians 4:19
- e) Being Abandoned by God to Sin Romans 1:24,26,28
- f) Encouraging Others to Sin Romans 1:32
- g) Experiencing Hell on Earth James 3:6, 1 Timothy 5:6

Seven Steps Upwards

- a) Resisting Sin in our Attitudes James 4:7
- b) Overcoming Sin by Faith in Christ Galatians 5:16
- c) Habitually being Victorious over Sin Romans 6:14, 1 John 5:4-5
- d) Entering into the Secret of a Victorious Life Hid with Christ in God Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 3:1-3
- e) Being Taken by God into Deeper Fellowship 1 Timothy 1:12, 1 Corinthians 4:2
- f) Delivering Others from Sin. Jude 22-23
- g) Experiencing Heaven on Earth Jude 24-25, Philippians 4:6-7

Notes