

JUNE 25

2 Kings 8:1-9:13

Now, we have seen miracle after miracle so that Elisha was a walking legend. But the purpose for what God did was to bring Israel to worship Him alone. They chose instead to worship Baal and other gods. They still had the golden calves and thought they were worshiping Yahweh too. At this point then, God directed Elisha to the next step of judgment. When Elijah met the Lord on Mt. Sinai, God gave Elijah three assignments that would bring the final judgment to Israel. (1Kings 19:14-17) Selecting Elisha as his successor was just one of those. Today we see the next two acts of judgment. One question to ask as we've been reading these stories is the length of time that has passed since God spoke to Elijah. Just as a rough way to figure this out we can use the first story below.

2 Kings 8

Vs. 1-6 Another one of those little miracles, or is it? How long was the famine that came upon Israel when Elijah prayed? Now this doesn't say that Elisha was responsible for this famine, but the length is interesting since Elisha had a "double portion" of the Spirit. I wonder if anyone noticed this?

The time when the Shunammite woman began to receive Elisha as her guest, and before she built the prophet's chamber, might have been a year before she had the baby. When the child died, I'm thinking the child was at least 4 or 5 years old. So then, before this famine, Elijah had been away for at least 5-6 years. Now we can add at least seven more years. This means that before God finally began to judge Israel as He had told Elijah, at least 12 years had passed in which Israel was called to God by the miracles and ministry of this very unique prophet. Who says God isn't patient and full of mercy?

Vs. 7-15 This "anointing" of Hazael was commanded to Elijah as one of the acts of judgment God would bring against Israel. (1Kings 19:14-17) God was slow to anger and willing to welcome any repentant people.

V. 8 Notice that the Syrians had both knowledge of and respect for Elisha. They also acknowledged Yahweh as one of many gods.

V. 10 Elisha doesn't lie here. The king would have recovered, but Elisha knew that Hazael would murder him.

Vs. 16-29 This portion is sort of the historical backdrop for the anointing of Jehu in the next chapter. This shows to some degree the importance of Jehu's mission. Jehu was the third step of the judgment God spoke to Elijah.

All of these names are confusing. Since the northern and southern kingdoms were on good terms and were now related through Jezebel's daughter, they were naming their kids the same. This gives us two Ahaziah's and two Jehoram's (Joram).

Vs. 18-19 Notice that his wife was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoshaphat, the godly king, engineered this marriage. This marriage, and his friendship with Ahab, sent Judah into a long season of ungodliness and idolatry. It will not be until we read of Joram in 2 Chronicles 21 that we'll see how unfortunate Jehoshaphat's marriage alliance with Ahab had been. Even though Joram reigned with his father for five years prior to taking the throne for those eight years, he was more influenced by Ahab and his wife. His first official act as sole king of Judah was to kill his six brothers.

Vs. 20-24 Normally, Judah shouldn't have had a problem with Edom, but since they were not following the Lord, the Lord didn't give them victory.

Vs. 25-27 So then the Joram of Judah died, but the Joram of Israel was still alive. Ahaziah of Judah began to reign. This is a descendant of Ahab and he was also in the line of David.

Vs. 28-29 These cousins united to fight the Syrians again at Ramoth-gilead. I'm sure the Lord was in this defeat, just as He had planned the last defeat there that resulted in the death of Ahab. The stage is now set.

2 Kings 9:1-13

Vs. 1-3 "Tie up your garments" means that he should make himself ready to run. Jehu was apparently one of the commanders of the defeated army. This anointing would be done in such a way as to reflect the urgency and violence of what would follow.

Vs. 4-10 This is the other part of the judgment that God told Elijah would be carried out against Israel and against the house of Ahab.

Vs. 11-13 If Jehu was trying not to accept this anointing, God made sure his fellow commanders pressed the issue. These men recognized the prophet and they believed the word he had spoken to Jehu. How do you account for this "religiousness" of the people, yet they didn't worship God? They hated what Ahab and Jezebel had done to Israel and they knew of God's judgment, yet they themselves didn't follow God. I wonder if this is the same thing we see happening today. Protesting evil is not the same as following the Lord. The place true disciples follow the Lord is in the Word and in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples.

Acts 16:16-40

Vs. 16-24 So, this is how God would reach Philippi. I don't think we could write a book on church planting strategy using this event, because only God could arrange these things. This is the first of two times Paul would be persecuted for posing a threat to the area businesses.

Vs. 16-18 Notice that this demonic girl followed them around *for many days*. Paul wasn't somehow so spiritual that he immediately knew what was happening or what to do. Finally the Spirit roused him after "many" days.

Vs. 19-24 In the scope of Acts this is important that they are being accused of violating Roman law. This mob and the punishment must have happened quickly and violently, since Paul didn't have time to react and tell them he was a citizen of Rome.

Vs. 25-34 While getting ourselves arrested would be possible, this is hard to reproduce in contemporary strategies of church planting or growth. It's another of those *what must I do to be saved* experiences you find in Acts. In fact, it's the original one.

Vs. 35-40 This is interesting because Paul didn't just let it pass. He made a point of making the Roman magistrates publicly pronounce them (and Christianity) innocent. It was quick, easy and made a point.

This fits into what Jesus said to His disciples about being wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Psalm 143

This is a great psalm. Being able to identify with so much of this, I really appreciate the middle section, vs. 5-8. This is the kind of intense training in faith that all of us need. As Jesus told His disciples regarding the trials they would face, *the one who endures to the end will be saved*. That means they will be saved from a ruined faith and damaged life. Hoping in the steadfast love of the Lord is what saves us from damage.

Vs. 1-2 Even in asking God for help and deliverance, David knew that he didn't deserve God's help and that he himself was a sinner before God.

Vs. 3-4 But David was being pursued unfairly and it seemed that King Saul, with his army and resources, held the winning hand.

Vs. 5-7 Yet David's true hope was in the Lord. You see here that the Lord was David's passion and delight.

Vs. 8-10 David was learning of the Lord's *steadfast love*, and though he needed deliverance from this pressure and danger, he really desired to know the Lord and to be led by Him.

Vs. 11-12 God had promised David when David was a boy that he would be king. God had preserved him to this point and saved him many times. David knew the steadfast love of the Lord. Now he needed to keep trusting the Lord and keep relying on that love. David regarded himself as God's servant, but as God kept saving David, David knew that God regarded and held David to be His valued servant.

As disciples in the harvest, our highest honor is to be regarded as a servant in the Lord's work, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

Proverbs 17:26

Amen. You might look at vs. 27 and 28. I think these are all tied together.