

**JUNE 28**

**2 Kings 13-14**

We are seeing the last days of the northern kingdom of Israel. On June 30 they will be taken into exile, and only Judah will be left. I say "last days," but years are still passing by. Again, never let anyone say that God doesn't show grace and patience in the Old Testament. God's redemptive purpose is submerged in the middle of all of these kings and all of their sin, worshiping the wrong things, holding on to some degree of "religion" regarding Yahweh, yet ignoring His outstretched hand. God said through Isaiah, *I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people*. Not just all day long, but all day long for decades of decades.

## 2 Kings 13

V. 1 Notice that Jehu's son Jehoahaz reigned for 17 years. That is still a long time. In the US you'd get 3-5 presidents out of that length of time.

V. 3 Hazael of Syria named his son for the king he himself murdered. How touching. This now is the third Ben-hadad to rule Syria.

Vs. 4-9 Jehoahaz became so desperate that he began to seek the Lord. He didn't give up worshipping the other stuff, but God honored this step. There is a lot of grace in all of this. The purpose of God's patience and kindness is seen in what Paul says in Romans 2:4-5, *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*<sup>5</sup> *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Vs. 10-13 This son of Jehoahaz is also called Joash in v. 14. We have lots of name confusion going on here. Some names had different spellings and forms, like "Robert" and "Bob." The ESV translators are using both, and unfortunately they are not using them consistently to keep the names and individuals straight for us, as they do in the NIV. It's confusing. Notice that this Jehoash (Joash) also reigned for a long time. Through all these decades God was giving Israel chances to turn to Him. Now with this summary of his reign in place, we'll read what Jehoash did.

Vs. 14-19 There are lots of observations and questions in all of these stories, but for me the biggest question is always how they could recognize God's power in Elisha, but not obey and worship God as He desired. Like Jesus said, *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?* (Luke 6:46) This really should make us think about our work in the harvest and what it means to be a believer/disciple.

If I'm ever given this assignment and bearing fruit in the harvest and making disciples is the goal, I'll bang the arrows on the ground until they shatter and my hand's bleeding.

Vs. 20-21 Can you imagine this? A miracle is performed through Elisha's dead body. What a funny visual. The guys see the Moabites, and just throw this guy into the tomb and run. The Moabites ride by. Then the dead guy sticks his head out of the tomb, looks both ways, and runs after his friends. What point do you think God was making here? Apparently this story became known.

Vs. 22-23 This is the second time today that God's kindness is mentioned in helping Israel. His redemptive purpose for mankind was lost to the eyes of the Israelites, but it was always in focus for God. God was probably doing then what He is doing today. There are those whom God wants to save, and so the world keeps spinning. Mankind's disregard for God adds up to justifying His judgment against them. When the last of those whom God wants to reach come to Him, God brings the judgment. In this history here, I'm sure God was working multiple purposes in thousands of lives in many nations.

Vs. 24-25 This was the fulfillment of what God had promised Jehoash through Elisha. When it was mentioned in v. 5 that God gave them a deliverer or savior, this was probably the king of Assyria who began to attack Syria. The conflict with Assyria would also explain why Jehoash was able to take back cities that had previously been lost to Israel. It was all God's grace. God delivered as promised, but there was no acknowledgement or true repentance. They may even have held a sacrifice for Yahweh, but they went on worshipping all the other stuff too.

## 2 Kings 14

Vs. 1-6 We'll read more about Amaziah of Judah later. The purpose of this history is really to talk about his pride and subsequent conflict with Jehoash of Israel. When you read about Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25, you'll wonder why it mentions him as a good king. But there is a pattern that emerges. Many of the kings were faithful or did something good when they were young, and then went spiritually "nuts" later, either when they had a victory, or when they got older, or both. I think the Lord intends that this "pattern" should be a word to the wise.

This is apparently something good he did in following the Lord.

V. 7 This is a victory that God gave Amaziah, but you'll never, ever guess what Amaziah did right after that victory and before this next verse.

Vs. 8-10 This was probably facilitated by God to judge Amaziah for being such a dummy.

Vs. 11-14 God humbled Amaziah. This is the first mention of a king of Israel looting Jerusalem.

Vs. 15-16 So this is the last of Jehoash. His son, Jeroboam, would reign the longest of all the kings of Israel.

Vs. 17-22 Whenever you read of a conspiracy, you know the king was up to no good. This was the end of Amaziah. Apparently after Jehoash took him prisoner, he released him. Amaziah's son Azariah was also known as Uzziah.

Vs. 23-29 Notice that this king of Israel reigned for 41 years, longer than any other king of the northern kingdom, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, yet God patiently kept showing mercy. From the beginning of Jehu's reign to the end of the reign of his great grandson, Jeroboam, it has been over 100 years ( $28+17+16+41=102$ ). That's a lot of patience, mercy and grace.

The borders restored to the northern kingdom make the country look the same as it did under Solomon. The weakness and warring of Syria and Assyria made this possible, but of course, the Lord was in that too.

Vs. 25-27 This is the prophet Jonah from the book of that name. Apparently God also revealed to Jonah that Assyria would be the land that would destroy this northern kingdom. That is why Jonah ran, rather than offer a message of forgiveness to Assyria. Assyria would now begin to rise to power, but first God reached out to both Israel and Assyria.

Israel was to have been God's redemptive witness to the world. They still will be that. As Paul said in Romans 11:29, *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable*. Thankfully, even our work in the harvest is not dependent on us. It is His calling, His work, His purpose and His harvest.

Vs. 28-29 This is funny to read of what "Jeroboam did." It was God who helped Israel in His love and mercy.

### **Acts 18:23-19:12**

#### Acts 18:23-28

V. 23 This begins Paul's third and final missionary journey recorded in Acts. Just for your information, the books of 1 and 2 Timothy hint at other travels of Paul after the events in Acts. Oddly enough, 1 Timothy seems to be Paul's instructions for Timothy to rebuild the church at Ephesus, as Paul was heading to churches in Macedonia. Apparently something happened that had damaged some churches. It could have been what Paul will mention in Acts 20 when he meets the Ephesian elders, or it could be that the Romans were beginning to persecute the church, or both.

Vs. 24-27 Apollos is mentioned here and in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Apparently he taught in the area around Ephesus, but his message only mentioned that Jesus was the Messiah, not that Jesus was

the payment for sin and was raised from the dead. Aquila and Priscilla invited him to supper and set him straight.

That is an interesting point. Our message is not "believe in God," or even "Jesus is God," but that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Savior of men who paid for our sins and was raised from the dead and that there is salvation in no other. That was the error of the kings of Israel. They had Yahweh as one of many gods. As much as it sounds politically incorrect, the truth is that there is only one God for all men and there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ. When Jesus reigns during the Millennial Kingdom, there will be no "religious tolerance," but there will be truth, salvation and healing.

Acts 19:1-12

V. 1 So Apollos went to Corinth, and now Paul was in Ephesus.

Vs. 2-7 Back in the Gospels, there was a conflict between the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus. The Pharisees tried to exploit this difference. When Jesus was confronted by John's disciples, He was very gentle with them. The first recorded parable Jesus told was to John's disciples to help them understand the difference between Him and John. When Paul met these twelve, traveling disciples of John (Jews) they are in a place where Apollos had been teaching the baptism of John. There might have been a potential for conflict or division. This, I think, is why the Holy Spirit came upon them visually and with tongues and prophecy. Their faith and experience was now linked to that of the apostles and to the Gentile church through this sign by the Holy Spirit.

V. 10 Notice the time marker. In Acts 20:31 Paul will say he was in Ephesus for three years. This is all probably approximate times. It is safe to say that Paul was in Ephesus, off and on, for about three years. It could be that the two years refers to the time Paul was allowed to teach in the hall of Tyrannus.

Vs. 11-12 This was parallel to what Peter did in Acts 5:15-16. This outpouring of healing and miracles showed God's interest in establishing the church in Ephesus, not Paul's gifting. Again, I think this is proof that what happened in Acts was unique. You don't hear of this happening today, either by virtue of gifting, or by our strategizing. God does what He does when it fulfills His purpose. I'm convinced that we'll see more of God's working in the harvest, than in any other place. God's power is specific to His purpose of making disciples, who make disciples.

### **Psalm 146**

So, how do you respond to a psalm like this that sounds so triumphant and confident, when you yourself are struggling? Because of our weakness of spirit and the effects of sin, we can hold the mindset of this psalm for an hour or a day or a week, but if the waves roll over us too long, we struggle to hold these realities. But I guess that is the point. It is in trials that we deny our fears and resist the temptations to react or give up. In the conflict of our feelings, we hold fast to what we know is true because we know it is true. And we wait on the Lord because the very thing this psalm says is true.

Vs. 1-2 This was David's praise **after** the Lord had delivered him through those long years of distress.

Vs. 3-4 This is what David learned as he ran and had to depend on God. I'll bet during those early years he and his men expected some leader in Saul's government to come to their aid and bring peace. That never happened.

Vs. 5-7 This is Who to hope in, and why. Notice the use of *whose* and *who*.

Vs. 8-10 Now notice *The Lord*, and notice what He does. His heart is with the lowly who cry out to Him. And just like having a Father in heaven, it isn't just that we have a Father, but that He is eternal, almighty God. His help and power are everlasting.

What can you say? *Praise the Lord!*

**Proverbs 18:2-3**

What I get from these verses, as a disciple, is to be slow in expressing my opinion and slow to show contempt or ridicule. God describes what is really behind these things.