

2 Kings 13 – Thursday, April 21st, 2016

2 Kings 13 (NKJV) — 1 In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. 2 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He did not depart from them. 3 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. 4 So Jehoahaz pleaded with the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

- I'd like to begin with a couple of thoughts that will be germane to our understanding of what's taking place in Israel at this time.
- First, Jehoahaz becoming king over Israel in Samaria fulfilled 2 Kings 10:30 concerning the promise made to Jehu as the king.
- Specifically, that while Israel continued in idolatry, Jehu's descendants would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.

- The significance of this is that God is faithful in spite of our being unfaithful and harkens unto the voice of our cry though in sin.
- That's not to say that God turns a blind eye to our willful disobedience and sin, in His willingness to hear or answer our prayers.
- However, it is to say, that God does hear or answer our prayers when we plead with him out of a sincere heart of repentance.

- This actually ties into the second thought, which has to do with the reason Jehoahaz pleaded with the Lord in true repentance.
- It's important to note how that in verse four, the Lord saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.
- In other words, Israel had hit rock bottom, as it were, which is the reason Jehoahaz genuinely seeks the Lord for deliverance.

Ronny Simon, who some of you know was our tour guide in Israel, wrote of this in his terrific book, "Give us a king," "The lowest point in the history of the kingdom of Israel was reached during the reign Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu. ...And the, with things worse than they had ever been for Israel, we are told: "So Jehoahaz pleaded with the Lord and the Lord listened to him."

- Presupposing you already know where I'm going with this I'll simply say, that often times, this is the only time we seek the Lord.
- Namely, when we're at our lowest point and have hit rock bottom. It's at this low point that we realize just how weak we are.
- Then, like with Jehoahaz, it's when we realize just how weak and vulnerable we really are that we cry out to the Lord for help.

Psalms 50:15 (NKJV) — 15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

5 Then the LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as before. 6 Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the wooden image also remained in Samaria. 7 For He left of the army of Jehoahaz only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers; for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 9 So Jehoahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Joash his son reigned in his place.

- This is textbook in the sense that once again we see Israel's pattern of turning from God, and being defeated by their enemies.
- Then, under the oppressive rule of the enemy, they cry out for deliverance, and the Lord delivers them, but they don't repent.
- This because, there was never a godly sorrow that led them to a genuine repentance rather, it was the sorrow of their suffering.

Charles Spurgeon, "Israel's repentance was only half-hearted; they repented because they suffered. They repented because of the suffering rather than because of the sin. They went back to the sin after they escaped from the sorrow."

10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. 11 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them. 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, all that he did, and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 13 So Joash rested with his fathers. Then Jeroboam sat on his throne. And Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

- Here again we have yet another king who did evil in the sight of the Lord in that he didn't depart from all the sins of Jeroboam.
- When we get to 2 Chronicles 25, we'll be provided with more detail about this war with Amaziah, which led to his utter defeat.
- The reason I mention this is that it speaks to the grace and mercy of God, Who, in spite of Israel's sin, grants them the victory.

Ronny Simon of this wrote, "With all of the fire and brimstone hurled at the kings of Israel over the generations, there were also a few moments of grace. One of these moments comes in the story of the death of Elisha, when Joash, a king of Israel who both sinned and caused others to sin, visits the dying prophet."

14 Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"

- We'll get back to this encounter between Joash and Elisha who we're told is on his deathbed; I first want to point out something.
- Notice we're told that Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. I realize that seems to be an obvious thing.
- However, there's more to it than that, and I think we'd be grossly remiss were we not to take a moment and look closer at this.

- Elisha is about 80-years old at this point and it's believed that he has served the Lord for about last 55-years of his godly life.

- There are no sins or evil recorded in scripture concerning Elisha. Of course that doesn't mean he was sinless, rather blameless.
- The only one other than Elisha, of whom there are more recorded miracles, is the Savior Himself, who performed many more.

- The reason I point this out is as great and godly as Elisha was and as many miracles as he performed he still got sick and died.
- The death of the prophet Elisha brings up the matter of a false teaching that has taken up residence in the body of Christ today.
- What I'm speaking of is what's known as the word faith teaching that basically says if you have enough faith you never get sick.

15 And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 17 And he said, "Open the east window"; 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 you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them." 18 Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. 19 And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."

- To me, this is one of the most dramatic accounts in all of scripture that speaks to limiting the almighty hand of our almighty God.
- Like Joash does here, we're just as prone to tie the hands of God's limitless blessings, with the ropes of our scarcity mentality.
- Sadly, we're all too ready to limit that which God desires to do in our lives, by only striking our Syria with the bow three times.

I absolutely love what Charles Spurgeon says concerning the living of our lives by trusting God to do grand and glorious things, "Dear friends, let us seek so to live that even ungodly men may miss us when we are gone."

- Before we move onto verse twenty, there's something else I think we should take note of and it has to do with the symbolism.
- More specifically, the symbolism of Elisha having Joash fire arrows in the direction of Syria, as it relates to a declaration of war.

Adam Clarke explained it this way, "It was an ancient custom to shoot an arrow or cast a spear into the country which an army intended to invade. ...The dart, spear, or arrow thrown, was an emblem of the commencement of hostilities."

- What Elisha is hoping to do here is to encourage Joash to trust God for strength and deliverance subsequent to his own death.
- This because, Joash to his credit, was keenly aware that the strength of Israel was in part due to the influence of a godly Elisha.
- In other words, Elisha deemed it necessary to assure Joash that God will continue strengthening and delivering Israel after him.

- I would suggest that it's for this very reason that Elisha gets so angry with Joash for only firing three arrows towards the enemy.
- Had Joash but trusted God for a grand and glorious victory over Syria, he would have struck five or six times, instead of three.
- This begs the question of why he only struck with three instead of five or six. I believe that he did this for a number of reasons.

- First, Joash did not possess boldness rather, he possessed a half-hearted timidity instead, and it bears out in his apprehension.
- Second, his half-hearted timidity seems to indicate he himself was ungodly, which may explain why Elisha is intimidating to him.
- Third, I see Joash as the quintessential excuse maker such that he's the type of man who always makes excuses for inaction.

- Fourth, I'm of the belief that Joash was also the kind of man who placed little or no value on that which he saw as a little thing.
- By that I mean, the act of simply firing arrows in Syria's direction seemed of little value to him, which is why he treats it as such.
- The point being is that Joash treated this "little thing," by acting upon it in a little way, and as such, limits God in his littleness.

Charles Spurgeon has an interesting thought in this regard, "It is a fact that God has purposed all things both great and little; neither will anything happen but according to his eternal purpose and decree. It is also a sure and certain fact that, oftentimes, events hang upon the choice of men. Their will has a singular potency."

20 Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. 21 So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

- This account is peculiar for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it's one of the more unusual miracles in the Bible.
- Actually, there is little in the way of explanation as it relates to this miraculous resuscitation of others by the bones of Elisha.
- This has led many a Bible commentator to speculate as to why this happened. Thought is it may have to do with Elisha himself.

One such commentator writes, "This is one of the more strange and unusual miracles in the Bible. There is little explanation and the silence of the record suggests that there was not inherent power in the bones of Elisha to resuscitate others. This seems to be a unique, one-time miracle to bring honor to the memory of this great prophet."

22 And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence. 24 Now Hazael king of Syria died. Then Ben-Hadad his son reigned in his place. 25 And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz recaptured from the hand of Ben-Hadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times Joash defeated him and recaptured the cities of Israel.

- We're told here at the end of the chapter in verse twenty-five, that Joash only defeated Syria three times exactly as Elisha said.
- Would to God that it would never be said of us, our victory in our walk with God was only experienced a limited amount of time.