

Week Eight – 2 Kings 9-15

This week we begin to see the beginning of the end for Israel. It's been hinted at for weeks but we know it's coming — they will fail. They will get this wrong. They need a redeemer. They need a saviour. They cannot get it right, king after human king, they are falling all over each other like a pileup on the highway. Eventually the last car crashes and we see the damage stretches for miles and miles and miles. Or in this case, years and years and years.

Chapter 9 begins with a secret ordination service. If you know the story of Samuel anointing David while Saul was king, this has a similar feel.

9:1 Then Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Tie up your garments, and take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. 2 And when you arrive, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. And go in and have him rise from among his fellows, and lead him to an inner chamber. 3 Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, 'Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."

Go, find Jehu, go somewhere private, anoint him, ...and run.

Why? Why run?

Because there was already a king of Israel — Joram is king.

But God has a plan to enact some vengeance on Israel through Jehu. Verse 4 – 4 So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. 5 And when he came, behold, the commanders of the army were in council. And he said, "I have a word for you, O commander." And Jehu said, "To which of us all?" And he said, "To you, O commander." 6 So he arose and went into the house. And the young man poured the oil on his head, saying to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. 7 And you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, 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 territory of Jezreel, and none shall bury her." Then he opened the door and fled. 11 When Jehu came out to the servants of his master, they said to him, "Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you?" And he said to them, "You know the fellow and his talk." 12 And they said, "That is not true; tell us now." And he said, "Thus and so he spoke to me, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel.'" 13 Then in haste every man of them took his

garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, “Jehu is king.”

So Elisha’s servant comes and anoints Jehu as he was told to do and flees. When Jehu comes out, his servant are all “Is everything ok? That was weird.” To which he’s like...you know, those weirdos, and the weird things they say. But they press him further and when he tells them what actually happened, they don’t panic, they’re not shocked. They take off their coats and capes and robes and lay them at Jehu’s feet. This is an act of honor. They blow the trumpet. Jehu is king.

Jehu means business. He tells his men to say nothing but instead rides to where Joram is healing after the last battle. Ahaziah is with him. Jehu rides up to the city gate and as messengers ride out to meet him, he is able to recruit them to join him. Finally Joram and Ahaziah ride out to meet him and it says in 2 Kings 9:21 — Then Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah set out, each in his chariot, and went to meet Jehu, and met him at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22 And when Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” He answered, “What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?”

Note they’re at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. If you remember from the week that Rachel taught, this land was stolen from Naboth in a really dirty move from Jezebel. He was falsely accused and murdered for not giving the king his land. Because of their actions against Naboth, they were cursed saying that the lineage of Ahab would be cut off. Ahab repented and humbled himself and God relented saying he wouldn’t do it in Ahab’s generation.

Well, here we are. Two men in Ahab’s family line – Joram and Ahaziah.

When they see that Jehu has not come in peace, Joram tells Ahaziah to run. And in this epic, almost Lord of the Rings like moment, verse 23 says – And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart, and he sank in his chariot.

One down. He tells his men to throw him in the plot of land that belonged to Naboth. This is to fulfill the prophecy from Elijah. Jehu says Jehu says in 2 Kings 9:26 — “As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons—declares the LORD—I will repay you on this plot of ground.’ I’m reminded in this passage of when Cain kills Abel and in Genesis 4:10 the Lord says “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.” God sees injustice and he doesn’t simply move on. He is moved by blood spilled. He is moved by the blood of lambs and the blood of birds and the blood of the innocent. He is moved by the injustice done against Naboth and we know that

when Christ hangs on that tree, the spilled blood of Christ would forever cry out from the ground on behalf of those he came to save.

God saw the injustice against Naboth. He saw the betrayal. He saw the whining passive nature of Ahab and the manipulative moves of Jezebel. He has not forgotten and now here lays Ahab's offspring, dead on the ground where once Ahab thought he was gaining ground. Where he thought he was working things for his good, God now has the final word that all that Ahab built will end in ruins.

Next Jehu's bow takes his aim at Ahaziah — chapter 9:27 — When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. And Jehu pursued him and said, "Shoot him also." And they shot him in the chariot at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo and died there.

Vengeance comes on the plains of Armageddon, Megiddo, and there Ahaziah dies under the hand of Jehu.

So this all is happening and in Jezreel, just inside the valley of Megiddo in Israel, Jezebel hears of what is happening. Jezebel, the woman who slayed the prophets of Israel, who manipulated the kingdom of Ahab, hears that Jehu is enacting vengeance.

Chapter 9:30 — When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window.

We don't know why Jezebel decided to put on makeup and do her hair. Was she going to try and seduce Jehu? Entrap him? We know that she has a reputation of using her sexuality, whoring, and sorcery against people. And she has her sights on Jehu.

And as Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?"

Now if you remember the story of Zimri — we went over him briefly a few weeks ago. Zimri worked for Elah king of Israel. He decided to throw a coup and killed Elah while Elah was partying with friends. He reigned for 7 days before word got out and he burned the king's palace down around him, killing himself in the process.

Zimri will go down in history as a man who betrayed the throne of Israel. AND now Jezebel sees Jehu, knowing he's been anointed king in place of Joram, he's killed Joram and Ahaziah and now he's riding toward the royal palace. She asks "Are you coming in peace, Zimri?" She knows what she's saying and Jehu has no time for it.

He pays her no attention that we see but instead looks to her eunuchs and asks in verse 32 — “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three eunuchs looked out at him.

He is asking — who of you are sick of her regime? Who of you are done? Who’s with me?

Verse 33 — He said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down. And some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, and they trampled on her.

It seems, without hesitation, the eunuchs toss Jezebel out. She is thrown out of her window. Jehu goes in to feast and drink and then says, you know what — she’s the wife of a king. She’s a king’s daughter. Let’s go ahead and bury her.

Verse 35 — But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. 36 When they came back and told him, he said, “This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite: ‘In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel, 37 and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.’”

The words have all come true against Ahab and Jezebel. But Jehu isn’t done.

Chapter 10 — Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of the city, to the elders, and to the guardians of the sons of Ahab, saying, 2 “Now then, as soon as this letter comes to you, seeing your master’s sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, fortified cities also, and weapons, 3 select the best and fittest 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, the two kings could not stand before him. How then can we stand?” 5 So he who was over the palace, and he who was over the city, together with the elders and the guardians, sent to Jehu, saying, “We are your servants, and we will do all that you tell us. We will not make anyone king. Do whatever is good in your eyes.” 6 Then he wrote to them a second letter, saying, “If you are on my side, and if you are ready to obey me, take the heads of your master’s sons and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow at this time.” Now the king’s sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were bringing them up. 7 And as soon as the letter came to them, they took the king’s sons and slaughtered them, seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets and sent them to him at Jezreel. 8 When the messenger came and told him, “They have brought the heads of the king’s sons,” he said, “Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until the morning.” 9 Then in the morning, when he went out, he stood and said to all the people, “You are innocent. It was I who conspired

against my master and killed him, but who struck down all these? 10 Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what he said by his servant Elijah.” 11 So Jehu struck down all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, all his great men and his close friends and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

So Jehu does this really bold thing — he sends letters to all of the households of Ahab’s 70 sons. He tells them, go ahead and get all of your chariots and weapons and strong men and put the next son of Ahab on the throne. Go ahead. I dare you.

They’ve all heard of what Jehu has done and they say — no way. We’re not putting a king on the throne. Do what is good in your eyes.

So Jehu says – cool. Behead your master and send me his head.

70 heads arrive in baskets to where Jehu is in Jezreel. It’s straight out of a horror film. Jehu not only receives the heads but tells them to pile them up outside of the city gate. He tells the people – Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what he said by his servant Elijah

This is the fulfillment of God’s word. Jehu goes on to kill all who remained of Ahab’s house — all his great men, close friends, priests, all of them, until none remained.

Verse 12 — 12 Then he set out and went to Samaria. On the way, when he was at Beth-eked of the Shepherds, 13 Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah, and he said, “Who are you?” And they answered, “We are the relatives of Ahaziah, and we came down to visit the royal princes and the sons of the queen mother.”

Oh, bad day to be related to Ahaziah or Ahab in any way. Obviously word has not reached this crew. They’re about to have a bad day.

Vs 14 — He said, “Take them alive.” And they took them alive and slaughtered them at the pit of Beth-eked, forty-two persons, and he spared none of them.

Jehu is cleaning house. This is like when a president comes into office and he gets a whole new staff, cabinet, you name it. Just thankfully we don’t live in a time when every 4 years there’s a mass slaughter of former White House aides and employees.

Jehu meets a friend along the road, Jehonadab the son of Rechab, who was an Arab king, and Jehonadab joins Jehu in the remainder of his work.

Verse 17 — And when he came to Samaria, he struck down all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had wiped them out, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke to Elijah.

And just when you thought Jehu's hands and sword couldn't get any bloodier

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Then Jehu assembled all the people and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu will serve him much. 19 Now therefore call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests. Let none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu did it with cunning in order to destroy the worshipers of Baal. 20 And Jehu ordered, "Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal." So they proclaimed it. 21 And Jehu sent throughout all Israel, and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And they entered the house of Baal, and the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. 22 He said to him who was in charge of the wardrobe, "Bring out the vestments for all the worshipers of Baal." So he brought out the vestments for them. 23 Then Jehu went into the house of Baal with Jehonadab the son of Rechab, and he said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search, and see that there is no servant of the LORD here among you, but only the worshipers of Baal." 24 Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Jehu tells the people "Ahab worshipped Baal but I'm going to worship him more!" He says to gather every person who worships Baal. None missing. Scripture tells us he did it with cunning. He has a plan. We've seen that from the beginning. Throughout all of Israel, the word goes out. So you know some time passes. People think, Jehu has stopped killing people. This is promising. He seems happy now. So people from all of ISrael make the pilgrimage to worship Baal. He tells them to bring out the clothes for everyone. And he says "Make sure there's not of those weird God-followers in here. Just the ones who worship Baal."

And they all went in to the temple. And in a mass execution, Jehu spares no one. Verse 24 —

Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside and said, "The man who allows any of those whom I give into your hands to escape shall forfeit his life." 25 So as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guard and to the officers, "Go in and strike them down; let not a man escape." So when they put them to the sword, the guard and the officers cast them out and went into the inner room of the house of Baal, 26 and they brought out the

pillar that was in the house of Baal and burned it. 27 And they demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.

They kill everyone. All of them. They burn the pillar of Baal. They destroy Baal's temple and turn it into a sewage pit. The worship of Baal, the love of Ahab, the power of Jezebel has ended with death, blood, and sewage.

For anyone who loves the Lord, who has stayed faithful, who has been praying for their nations to turn back to him, this looks like the answer. If I'm a citizen of Israel and I'm following God, and I hear of Jehu riding on his horse shooting the king in the middle of his shoulder blades with an arrow, inciting eunuchs to throw Jezebel out of a window, and now turning the temple of Baal and its worshippers into a pile of rubble and a toilet bowl, I'm thinking — hey, maybe this is when revival happens and everyone turns back to Yahweh. My heart is celebrating in hopes of that for these people. Ahab and Jezebel's regime and family have been killing the people of God for decades. This is the equivalent of someone coming in and killing Hitler and all of his family and regime and Nazis in one fell swoop. It looks like justice. For the Jewish people, it would be justice for Hitler's entire regime to fall by the hand of one man. For the Israelites in Jehu's time, this is the family that slaughtered them all. Destroyed them. This looks like justice.

But justice and vengeance isn't all that the people need. Yes, the word of the Lord will not fail. But they need redemption for their sinful hearts. They don't just need a culture change, they need the cross. They don't just need society to break under the judgement of God, they need their own knees to fall under the judgement of God. And that doesn't happen. Jehu can't change their hearts.

While Jehu wipes out Baal, verse 29 tells us – But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin—that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. 30 And the LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” 31 But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin.

Oh Jehu. You could not be Jesus. We still need Jesus. The people of Israel still need a redeemer. They don't just need a king with a sword, they need a king with a sacrifice. They don't just need blood spilled by the hands of man, they need the blood spilled from the hands of God.

Remember last week when Hazael went to see Elisha to ask about the king of Syria, Ben-Hadad's recovery? Elisha wept because Hazael was going to wreak

absolute havoc and destruction on the people of Israel. AND now we see it's happening.

Verse 32 — In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel.

So this is where we leave Israel for now.

Let's check in with the southern kingdom.

Ahaziah is dead by the hand of Jehu.

Chapter 11:1 — Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family. 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not put to death. 3 And he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

Athaliah, who is Ahab and Jezebel's daughter or granddaughter, hears of her son's death and kills the rest of the family. We'll see she's not that much unlike her matriarchal mentor, Jezebel. She wants the power for herself. She is not motivated by love but by the throne.

Ahaziah's son, her grandson, Joash is hidden away during her rampage. He has the rightful claim to the throne but she doesn't know he's still alive. Much like Moses, Joash is hidden by a young woman in the castle, Ahaziah's sister, Athaliah's daughter, and he is preserved for the right time and place.

Young men and women, never underestimate your roles in the kingdom. We've seen in kings time and time again how a young woman has taken a bold move to speak out, protect, or act, and that has been a means of provision for someone to see God move.

For six years, Joash/Jehoash is hidden away. In verses 4-20, which I don't have time to read right now, but read it before we go on. The priest has a plan. He obviously knows of Jehoash. He knows that he is the real king. He also knows that Athaliah isn't going to like this news.

Six years — until the priest says — it's time. Make him king, protect him when we proclaim it. He knows Athaliah.

Verse 10 — And the priest gave to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the LORD. 11 And the guards

stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house on behalf of the king. 12 Then he brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!"

Here is the new king of Judah, surrounded by the spears and shields of King David. The anointed one, Jehoash is guarded by the legacy of a man who loved the Lord. He begins his reign with reminders that God surrounds those who are his. That God alone holds the throne of Judah. This child, really, is crowned king and they cheer. Athaliah is struck down.

Jehoash is 7 years old when he's crowned king. He will reign for 40 years.

Chapter 12:2 — "And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3 Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and make offerings on the high places."

Jehoash will restore the temple. He buys the safety of Jerusalem by giving Hazael of Syria all of the wealth and gifts and gold that was in the treasuries of the temple and king's house. He's not trying to accumulate for himself.

Jehoash takes it on himself to rebuild the temple. Remember that glorious temple that Solomon built? It's in ruins and needs work. They collect money and take donations to rebuild the temple.

While Jehoash is reigning in Judah, the prophet Joel emerges on the scene to call the people of Judah to repentance.

Joel 1:5-7 says —

- Awake, you drunkards, and weep,
and wail, all you drinkers of wine,
because of the sweet wine,
for it is cut off from your mouth.
- 6 For a nation has come up against my land,
powerful and beyond number;
its teeth are lions' teeth,
and it has the fangs of a lioness.
- 7 It has laid waste my vine
and splintered my fig tree;
it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down;
their branches are made white.

If you want to get a picture of Judah at the time of Joash's reign, just go read Joel. It's not peachy. It's not sunshine and roses. Hazael is plundering Israel and Joel is lamenting the destruction. He calls to Judah – repent, repent, repent.

1: 13-14

Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests;
wail, O ministers of the altar.
Go in, pass the night in sackcloth,
O ministers of my God!
Because grain offering and drink offering
are withheld from the house of your God.

14 Consecrate a fast;
call a solemn assembly.
Gather the elders
and all the inhabitants of the land
to the house of the LORD your God,
and cry out to the LORD.

But Jehoash will die. And those that built the temple with him will die.

And so will every king who comes next.

Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, takes the throne in Israel and in 2 Kings 13:2-3, we see that he isn't as passionate about restoring Israel as his father was – He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin; he did not depart from them. 3 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Syria and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael. (Ironically, Hazael appears to have named his son after the man he murdered.)

Remember what Elisha said about Hazael? 2 Kings 8:11 — the man of God wept. 12 And Hazael said, "Why does my lord weep?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel. You will set on fire their fortresses, and you will kill their young men with the sword and dash in pieces their little ones and rip open their pregnant women."

So these are bad times. Jehoahaz appeals to the Lord and chapter 13:4-7 says Then Jehoahaz sought the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Syria oppressed them. 5 (Therefore the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they escaped from the hand of the Syrians, and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly. 6

Nevertheless, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained in Samaria.) 7 For there was not left to Jehoahaz an army of more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots and ten thousand footmen, for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing.

And I can tell you this is where the kettle starts to bubble. I have a metal tea kettle that sits on my stove. Every morning we start it for coffee. I always know when it's about to whistle because for a good minute before, the whole thing starts rattling inside. You can hear the bubbles. The pressure is building. The steam is rising. The heat is on.

And this is Judah and Israel. The kettle isn't screaming yet but if you're paying attention, it's starting to rattle.

Jehoahaz dies. His son, Jehoash/Joash, takes the throne and continues the same wickedness as his fathers.

Elisha is on his deathbed. The nation is losing its strongest prophet to date. Through the shooting of arrows, again a physical act to speak a spiritual truth, God gives some provision for Israel from Syria. And Elisha dies.

There's a strange side story here of a marauding band coming through town and some corpse was thrown into the grave of Elisha, which then scripture says, "as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet."

This is so small and subtle but so important. See, in God's hands, we are not done until he says we're done. God's work doesn't die with his people. Death has no hold on him. Death has no dominion over him. God's power over death isn't only in one point of time. He's always held the power. He's always been sovereign. He always shows us that he exists outside of our understanding, our limits, and our finality.

And in chapter 13:22-23, we see the character of God shout from the pages – 22 Now Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.

Don't tell me the God of the Old Testament is grumpy, mean, or irrelevant. Do you see that? The Lord was gracious to them, and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them because of his covenant. So if you're wondering if God has grace and mercy and compassion for you, look at this right here. He is beyond long-suffering, beyond what you can possibly comprehend. And when

Christ shows up we see this embodied. We see this in the flesh and blood of a human, fully God and fully man, showing us what it looks like to be “gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.”

I don't have time to get into the story of Amaziah, but read it if you can. He takes the throne in Judah after his father Joash.

Jeroboam II takes the throne in ISrael after Joash dies.

We see in 14:26 that God sees — For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel. 27 But the LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

God stays faithful to his promise and covenant.

Azariah the son of Amaziah takes the throne.

Azariah, also known as Uzziah. If you know the book of Isaiah, you might know this name. Isaiah 6 opens with the death of Uzziah and Isaiah's vision of the Lord.

Don't miss this piece — a lot of those prophets in the back of the Old Testament? They're talking now. We see Jonah mentioned in chapter 14 here. Isaiah and Micah are just beginning their prophetic work in Judah. Amos and Hosea are at work in Israel. You can almost see that as Elisha dies, the word of God goes out to all of these prophets who are ready and bold and faithful.

We see that kings take the throne in Israel during Azariah/Uzziah's reign, one after another they're listed in 2 Kings —

Zechariah
Shallum
Menahem
Pekahiah
Pekah

And the chapter ends with Jotham, son of Azariah/Uzziah taking the throne in Judah.

We have two weeks left of this study and I can tell you the story doesn't end too well.

Israel and Judah need more than kings who slaughter, or half-hearted commitments to God.

They need more than vengeance. They need more than a rebuilt temple.
They need more than an innocent, child-like leader.
They need more than dead man's bones.
They need more than a few arrows in the hand of a desperate king.
They are so prone to wander and forget. And they will do it again and again.

Syria only continues to gain strength.
The neighboring countries are hungry, panting at their door to devour them.
Israel's power seems to be dwindling.

And yet – God sees. He hears. The blood of his people cries to him. He sees their bondage. Their oppression. And he has compassion on them.

While the prophets speak their words, and take the time to go read some of those books in tandem with these last few weeks to hear the cries of the people, the cry of the prophet, the call of God... sit inside the discomfort of knowing that we are not that much different or better than the people of Israel. We are not the prophets in these stories. WE're not the kings. We're the people with no names who suffer, who maybe follow God, maybe don't.

And yet, God has a plan. Christ is coming. A saviour who put death to death, who put the enemy under his feet, who does not grow weary or wander, he doesn't forget the statutes of his word, he came for his people and as 2 Kings 13:23 says he will not destroy us or cast us from his presence.

I've been spending some time in John 17 lately, the high priestly prayer of Christ, and it reminds me so much of this. John 17:11-12, these are the words that Christ prayer over you and me – “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost...”

