

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 24, Part 1

2 Kings 13-14, Part 1

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Jehu led his reformation that went part way, got rid of Baal, but didn't go all the way to get rid of the golden calves. He has been replaced by his son Jehoahaz, and he has been replaced by now Jehoash. Jehoash is going to rule until 786 thereabouts, and about 795, his son Jeroboam II is going to come on the throne.

Now, exactly why there was this co-regency, we don't know, and we don't have proof positive that there was one, but the numbers don't work otherwise. He's going to rule until 753 over in, so that's Israel, that's the northern kingdom. In the south, in Judah, I'll have to put that up a little higher, the son of Joash, and again we see the connection between the two kingdoms; really, Joash is also Jehoash, so these two guys are named the same.

Joash's son Amaziah comes to the throne about the same time as Joash, and as we're going to see, there is conflict between the north and the south, and in 791 Amaziah is captured by Joash, and at that point his 16-year-old son Uzziah, or Azariah, is put on the throne. We do not know how long Amaziah was in captivity. The best guess is that it was until Joash died, but his years have him on the throne for another 15 years.

So, the question is, where was he during that time while Uzziah is supposedly on the throne? We're not going to talk about Uzziah tonight, but we are going to talk about these three guys: Joash, Amaziah, and Jeroboam. And in a very significant way, we see the picture of what success can do to you. We begin with Jehoash.

Jehoash is depicted in kind of, as the image indicates here, kind of a positive and a negative way. First of all, it is said in verse 11 of chapter 13, "...he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit, he continued in them." Well, those sins are idolatry, the worship of the golden calves, also the use of priests who are not of the Aaronic line, and festivals at different dates than the Lord had specified. So, when you hear that phrase that is repeated of every king of the Northern Kingdom, he followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam, that's what we're talking about.

On the other hand, if you look down at verse 14, "...Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash, king of Israel, went down to see him and wept over him. My father, my father, he cried, the chariots and horsemen of Israel." Now, you may not remember, and I'll not risk my reputation by asking you if you remember, but back in chapter 2, if you look back on 2 Kings, when Elijah was taken up into heaven, verse 12, "...Elisha saw this and cried out, my father, my father, the

chariots and horsemen of Israel." Evidently, that phrase had been passed on down somehow so that king Jehoash knew it.

And he's saying, you have been to us what Elijah was earlier. You are our real defense. You are our real hope.

So, we say, hmm, what have we got here? We've got a man who's got one foot in each camp. We've talked about this before, and we'll have reason to talk about it again. If you keep one foot on the dock and put one foot on the boat, you're going to get wet.

And that's what's going on here. Now, it's fascinating if you look at the structure of the passage. Jehoash's passage is really just confined to verses 10 through 13.

Verse 10, "...in the thirty-seventh year of Jehoash king of Judah and so forth." Verse 12, "...as for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did." Verse 13, "...Jehoash rested with his ancestors. Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel." That's the typical announcement of these kings, all of them, Judah and Israel.

He came to the throne. At this point, he was that old. He ruled.

He did these things. He died. He was succeeded by his son or somebody else, and he was buried.

But the story then picks up again in verse 14. So, it's as though the rest of the chapter focuses on his relationship with Elisha, Elisha's death, and the events surrounding that. Why is that, do you think? Does anybody give any thought to that? Why tell this material on Elisha outside of the actual story of Jehoash? Was it to emphasize the importance of Elisha in the history of the country? I think that's exactly right.

I think that's exactly right. We are... Here's the end. Here is the conclusion of this material that started clearly back in 1 Kings chapter 17. And it's been going... I've said to you multiple times.

This is the last time I'll say it. Elijah, Elisha is one ministry. And there's a sense in which Jehoash recognized that.

I think again, we see this divided heart. He... I think Jehoash is grateful that the Baal threat has been dealt with and done away with. I think he's grateful, but he just can't go all the way to say, look, we ought to smash these idols.

If it means that people go back to Jerusalem three times a year to worship, all right. He couldn't go there. But I think that's the exact point.

Yeah, we've dealt with the details of Jehoash's story. But now, let's talk about his relationship with this prophet. And again, it's very interesting that we've got a mixed picture.

On the one hand, Elisha doesn't call him to repentance. Doesn't get after him. Verse 15: get a bow and some arrows.

And he did so. Take the bow in your hands, he said to the king of Israel. When he'd taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.

Open the east window, he said. And he opened it. Shoot, Elisha said.

And he shot. Elisha declared the Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram. You will completely destroy the Arameans.

Remember, Aram is Syria, and its capital is Damascus. And the Arameans are the Syrians. Remember that from the time of Jehu, which is 841, from that time all the way down to this, the Syrians have been a major problem for Israel, especially, but also Judah.

Now, I think part of the reason for that, I think, is that Jehu killed every good leader in the country. In a sense, just like Stalin in 1937, by cleaning out the whole Russian army leadership, created 1941 and 42 when millions of Russian soldiers died because of lousy leadership. Anyway, here we are.

Now, there's a sense in which Elisha is presenting a last gift. He is saying, OK, we're putting an end to the Assyrians' power. We're putting an end to their harassment of Israel.

Now, I ask you, why is that? Jehoash has not repented. He has not taken the next step to a perfect heart toward the Lord. And yet, Elisha says, I'm going to give you victory.

What's going on? Can you say grace? It's exactly what God did for Ahab. Remember that God simply showed up in the person of a prophet and said, God's going to deliver you. And we say, wait a minute, hold the phone here.

No, no, no, no. God can't do anything good until somebody's gotten everything straightened out. Well, if that were true, this room would be empty.

God's grace comes flowing out of him to people who don't deserve it, to people who haven't earned it. In the hope that they will indeed turn to him. Salvation doesn't begin with you and me.

It begins with God. And so, Elisha then says, take the arrows. The king took them.

Elisha told him to strike the ground. He struck it three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him.

And he said you should have struck the ground five or six times. Then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. Now, you are defeated only three times.

I think if I were Jehoash at that point, I would have said, how was I to know? Is that interesting? What's the lesson there? Are you looking for a little extra zeal, David? He should have asked. I would add that I believe in God for more.

Believe God for more. Well, I don't know how much I dare to ask God for. Maybe I'll just ask him for half a glass full.

God says, OK. Well, but that's kind of stupid. I mean, suppose I ask her for a full glass, and he only gives me half a glass.

That's called a lack of faith. But I think the things we've said here are exactly right. Oh, God, I want your best.

I want everything you've got for me. Zeal. God, what do you have for me? What do you want me to ask you for? And that kind of daring faith that says, I'm going to ask him for everything that I can.

Everything possible. Don't let it be said of any of us. Oh, I was going to do so much more for you, but you didn't ask. I was going to do so much more, but you didn't believe me.

You didn't dare. Oh, my. Oh, my.

Would the world be different if we were to dare, for God's sake and for the world's sake? So, Elisha died and was buried. Then you have this interesting story. The Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring.

Once, while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders. So, they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

I hope there's an instant replay of that in heaven. I want to see that. I want to see those guys running.

What's the story doing here? Why is this the last thing, the closing scene in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha? What's it about? Resurrection. It's about life. Life from the dead.

Life from the tomb. And that says to me, this, indeed, is what Elijah and Elisha's ministry was about. All those various miracles, all the issues, when you distill it all down, it's about bringing life from death.

And again, I want that to be said about my ministry and about my life. Now, sometimes, sometimes, they brought death. When we go back and look at Elisha's introductory ministry, there in chapter two, two things.

Number one is turning Jericho's poisonous water into pure, clean water. And number two, bears killing 42 young men. Whoa.

But there it is. There it is. And as I've said to you many, many times, God's intent is to bring life.

God's intent is to purify the evil and the corrupt. But whether he brings life is up to us. We've got a choice.

That's why Paul says that it is an interesting thing. You are the aura of life to some, and you are the breath of death to others. Yes, yes, yes.

Elijah and Elisha are the evident evidence of what God can do through lives that are fully committed, as opposed to these various kings that we've seen from Jehu on, who are sort of half-hearted. Yeah, I want God's way, but not all the way. Not where it's going to cost me, not where it might raise issues.

As I've said before, what is it going to mean? If you destroy those golden calves, and people start going back to Jerusalem to worship, you're going to lose your kingdom? What price? Notice verses 22 and 23. Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. That's the predecessor.

That's, that's Jehoash's predecessor. But the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion, and showed concern for them because of what? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those guys have been dead by this point for more than a thousand years.

What's going on? What does this tell us about God? He keeps his covenant. He is faithful. He is dependable.

He's reliable. He is true to his word, though a thousand years have passed. Now, it's interesting.

He doesn't say his covenant with Moses. Why the emphasis on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What was his promise to Abraham? Going to make you a great nation. Where? Yes, all over the world, but especially in Israel, in Judah.

So, they deserve to be run out of there. They deserve to be dispossessed. But God says, oh man, I made a promise a thousand years ago to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, that I was going to give them this land.

How can I run them out? Well, eventually, he's going to run them out, but not right away. And you see it, you see it in Hosea. How can I do this? Even then, Hosea may be right up to the destruction of the northern kingdom.

And God is saying, how can I do this? Well, God, it's very easy. They've broken your covenant in a million pieces. Just give them what they deserve.

God says, no, I can't do that, or can I? Wow, what a God. So, he says, to this day, isn't that interesting? And there's a lot of ink that has been spilled over to this day. What's this day? Yeah, because these books of kings are completed during the exile.

So, is this an earlier version, or is he really saying, yeah, we're in exile, but he is still unwilling to destroy us or banish us from his face? Wow, that's faith again, if that's the case. And I think it is, I think it is.

I think to this day, it is during the exile. We're here, but we're confident God has not given up on us because he's not that kind of a God.