

Title: **2 KINGS**
“Where is the God of Elijah?”
Text: 2 Kings 17:9-19
Subject: *The History of Israel and the Purpose of God*
Date: Tuesday Evening— 2003
Tape # X-58a
Readings: *Rex Bartley and Bobbie Estes*
Introduction:

2 Kings picks up the history of Israel's divided kingdom right where 1 Kings ended. It is a sad, sad history of man's rebellion, sin and idolatry.

ISRAEL

After Solomon's death, after the kingdom of Israel was divided, the northern kingdom of Israel was ruled for 250 years by nineteen different men. All of them were wicked, idolatrous, self-serving men.

God sent prophet after prophet to them, calling them to repentance.

- Elijah
- Elisha
- Amos
- Hosea
- Jonah

But Israel and her kings followed Baal and the gods of human invention. Walking after the lusts of their own hearts, they walked in obstinate defiance of God's right to be God, plunging themselves into deeper and deeper moral and spiritual degradation. At last, God gave them up!

JUDAH

Things were only slightly better in Judah. The southern kingdom of Judah survived for 140 years longer than Israel. She had twenty different kings, all from the family of David. Most of their kings were also wicked men. Few walked in the way of David. They wore his name, but knew nothing of his character or his God.

After a long history hearing and despising the Word of God Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians (ch. 17). 136 years later, Judah, following the same path of rebellion, idolatry and sin, was taken away in captivity to Babylon. Let's read the reason for their woe together and be warned (17:9-19).

(2 Kings 17:9-17) "And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. {10} And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: {11} And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: {12} For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. {13} Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. {14} Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. {15} And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. {16} And they left all the

commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. {17} And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

Proposition: It is man's disobedience to the revelation of God (the willful, deliberate disobedience of a heart of enmity against God) that brings upon men and women the everlasting wrath and judgment of God (Pro. 1:23-33; 29:1).

(Proverbs 1:23-33) "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. {24} Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; {25} But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: {26} I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; {27} When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. {28} Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: {29} For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: {30} They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. {31} Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. {32} For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. {33} But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

(Proverbs 29:1) "He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

Though the Lord God utterly destroyed the northern kingdom and swore that he would destroy Judah as well, he preserved a remnant, even in judgment, through whom Christ would come through the seed of David. He had sworn back in Genesis 49 that he would not destroy Judah until Christ had come. So God refused to cast them off altogether until after the resurrection of Christ. Then, in 70 AD, he destroyed the physical seed of Abraham and turn his hand of mercy to the gathering of his elect scattered throughout the world (Rom. 11).

(Romans 11:1-5) "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin. {2} God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, {3} Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. {4} But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of* Baal. {5} Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

(Romans 11:26) "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"

(Romans 11:29) "For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance."

(Romans 11:33-36) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! {34} For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? {35} Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed

unto him again? {36} For of him, and through him, and to him,
are all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen."

THE PROPHETS

Yet, rather than focusing our attention on the wickedness of Israel's kings, throughout these twenty-five chapters, the Holy Spirit tells a story of grace and mercy. It is a story that revolves around the lives and ministries of faithful prophets.

In addition to Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and Jonah, the history of Israel and Judah described in 2 Kings, takes in the ministries Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

It is true, there were in Judah a few good kings, a few who enacted laws for the glory of God and the good of his people, a few kings who tore down the groves, the high places, the altars, and the images of Baal.

HEZEKIAH

There were a few, like Hezekiah, who did "*that which was right in the sight of the Lord.*" We do not have to guess what is meant by those words.

(2 Kings 18:4-7) "He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. {5} He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him. {6} For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. {7} And the LORD was with him; *and* he

prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not."

JOSIAH

Many today make much ado about Egypt's boy king, Tut. But Egypt's king Tut was only a boy pagan, who followed the wickedness of his fathers. Judah had a boy king, by the name of Josiah, who stood head and shoulders above his fathers.

(2 Kings 23:25) "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there *any* like him."

- Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign.
- When he was eighteen years old, he began to restore the house of God.
- Hilkiah the priest found the Book of God in the ruins of the temple. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe. Shaphan read to Book to the king. And young King Josiah went to work for the glory of God and the good of his people.—Destroyed Idols!—Executed False Prophets!—Purged the Land of Homosexuals!—Put Away the Wizards and Witches!—And Kept the Passover!

Still, the story of God's mercy and grace, the story of God's blessings upon his people always revolves around his prophets, those men of God sent to proclaim his Word to his people.

ELIJAH

Elijah was John the Baptist of the Old Testament. As John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, so God's prophet's were always the forerunners of either judgment or of mercy.

But in the second chapter of 2 Kings, Elijah is distinctly set before us as picture of that blessed hope in which we live, anxiously awaiting our Lord's gracious call by which he will soon fetch us home.

(2 Kings 2:11-12) "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.—And Elisha saw it!"

- The Believer's Death—A Translation!
- The Second Coming and Resurrection Glory!

ELISHA

Elisha had faithfully served Elijah from the time the prophet of God had cast his mantle upon him. Now, the old prophet was about to go home. So he asked his faithful servant, what he wanted. Look at it (2:9-10).

(2 Kings 2:9-10) "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. {10} And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*."

Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, was not, as is commonly thought, a request that he might have twice the power and influence as a prophet that Elijah had. That would have been an absurd, selfish, ungodly request.

The law of God required that the firstborn son receive a double portion (Deut. 21:17) of his father's estate. What Elisha requested was that he might be received of God and treated by him as Elijah's firstborn son. Elijah said, "What you have asked is a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me in my ascension to heaven, you shall have this great boon.—*"And Elisha saw it!"*

That is exactly what God gives to all his people. He gives all his elect the double portion of his Firstborn Son, all the heritage of Christ (John 17:22; Isa. 40:1-2)!

- This great inheritance of grace and glory is freely bestowed upon every sinner to whom and in whom God reveals his Son in his glory.
- When a sinner receives this great boon of grace, like Elisha when he saw Elijah taken up, tears off his own clothes, takes up the mantle of Christ's righteousness, and walks with God forever in the power of his resurrection (Rom. 6).—This is exactly what we confess in believer's baptism.

WATERS HEALED

As Moses healed the bitter waters of Marah by casting in the tree that pictured the cross of Christ, Elisha healed the waters of Jericho by casting in salt (2:16-20). Before this, the land of Jericho was full of death and barren. Once the waters were healed, it was full of life and abounding with fruit.

The salt Elisha cast into the waters represented much the same thing as the tree at Marah. You will remember that God required Israel, with all their sacrifices to offer salt. His covenant was called "*a covenant of salt*" (Num. 18:19; 2 Chr. 13:5).

This is a picture of the gospel and its power in the lives of God's elect. It is the power of God unto salvation. Once the salt of covenant grace has been cast into our deadness and barrenness, life springs up in our very souls and the Spirit of God, by the covenant of salt makes us who were dead in trespasses and sins, (utterly useless!), fruitful unto God.

DITCHES

In chapter three the Lord performed a mighty miracle for Israel, Judah and Edom, when Moab threatened to destroy them.

(1 Kings 3:16-17) "Then came there two women, *that were* harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. {17} And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house."

(1 Kings 3:20) "And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom."

- Ditches were cut through all the land by the Word of God.—Conviction!
- Wherever a ditch was cut, the water of life filled the ditch, without any effort, or even sound, or even feeling on the part of any man.
- The ditches were filled with water in direct connection with the morning sacrifice.—Grace and life come to sinners by the power of God, as the result of and only as the result of, Christ's sacrifice!

A POT OF OIL

In chapter four there was a poor prophet's widow, who was left in debt when her husband died. She had two sons and nothing to

pay her debt. She was terrified that she and her sons might be taken into bondage by their creditor. The Lord God miraculously met her need by the power of his grace (4:1-7).

- She had a little oil in her vessel; but the only way she could get what she needed was to first have her little bit of oil completely poured out.—God only fills empty vessels!
- Once she emptied her little vessel, she never lacked again!

When we are emptied of self, God the Holy Spirit fills us. He brings to our souls all the fullness of Christ (by whom all our debt has been paid (A Conscience free of Guilt!), and all our needs supplied!

NEW BIRTH

Throughout the Scriptures, the new birth is portrayed as a resurrection from the dead (John 11; Eph. 2:4-8; Rev. 20:6). Here in 2 Kings 4, we have delightful picture of it in the resurrection of the Shunammite's son.

- This poor woman ran to the man of God with her dead son (v. 22).—Run to Christ for mercy for your sons and daughters.
- Elijah sent his servant running to meet her (v. 26).
- Elisha took the dead boy away to his own private room and performed his mighty miracle (vv. 32-37).—He prayed for the child (Christ's Intercession)—He stretched himself upon the child (mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand) and gave his life (as it were) to the child!

DEATH IN THE POT

At Gilgal (4:38-41), when men gathered herbs from the cursed earth, never suspecting that there might be danger in eating them

(“*For they knew them not.*”), they made a huge pot of pottage for the prophets. But there was death in the pot. Elisha cast meal into the pot, (Christ the Bread of Life), and there was no longer any harm or death in the pot.

In the last verse of chapter four (42-44), Elisha multiplied the loaves for the feeding of a multitude. They ate all they wanted, and plenty was left over.—God’s free grace in Christ is boundless, ever multiplied, fully satisfying, and there is an infinite abundance of it for sinners.

NAAMAN

The story of Naaman’s healing is tremendous and instructive (chp. 5).

- A Mighty Man of Wealth and Influence
- A Captain Among Israel’s Enemies
- A Leper
- A Man to Whom God sent a Little Girl who Believed God, who gave him a Word of Hope.
- A Man Whose Path God Crossed—“*I thought!*”
- A man Healed By Grace!

AXE HEAD

In chapter six the lost axe head that was made to swim, is a picture of our constant need of grace being supplied to us by the power and goodness of God.

- Men were working with a borrowed tool.—So are we.
- They lost the axe head.
- Elisha made it swim and returned it to them.—“*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.—Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.—Quicken me.*”

CHARIOTS OF FIRE

(6: 16-17)—The calm assurance of God’s presence.

FOUR LEPERS

Chapter 7—Came in Desperation, with no rights and little hope.

Found Bread and Life in Syria
Brought the News to Israel

THE HEART

- Jehu to Jehonadab (10:15-16)—“*Is thine heart right?*”—
“*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*”
- “*Took him up into his chariot!*”
- “*Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD.*”

As Gehazi, Elisha’s servant was commanded of the king to “*Tell all the great things that Elisha hath done,*” so I am commanded of God to constantly tell you all the great things Christ has done. Now, I ask, “Is your heart right with God? Do you trust our Savior? Give him your hand. Ride with him in his chariot of grace, and you will forever see the wondrous things he has accomplished by his zeal.