
History and Prophecy

Part 4

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This is Part 4 in a series that I have been giving on History and Prophecy. I was pondering why there's so much variance in Biblical interpretation and prophetic interpretation in particular. It's largely, I think a matter of perspective, and I think to a large extent a matter of historical perspective. There are a lot of wild ideas being peddled around, about prophecy, and in particular about the antichrist, the beast and the number 666. Some of the ideas, the theories that people are advancing about the antichrist and the beast are so far out that I find myself saying, "How did they come to this conclusion?" It seems so obvious to me that it is not correct and why can't they see that?

I began to realize that what most people do is, they turn over to the book of Revelation, to chapter 13, and they read about the beast, the image of the beast, the number of his name and the mark of the beast, and so forth, and they begin to speculate about what that might be and they try to look ahead into the future to see the future, as though the future already exists.

Show the Former Things

I find that virtually everybody that I read on the subject of prophecy, seems to utterly ignore the warning, the challenge that God produced through the prophet Isaiah, when He said in Isaiah 41:21 "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. {22} Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come."

The challenge is, if you are going to show me prophecy and tell me the future, what I want you to do is to show me the former things what they be so that I may ponder them, consider them, and come to understand the latter end thereof. This is a very significant statement that Isaiah made. You'll find it in Isaiah 41:23 "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods: yes, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. {24} Behold, you are of nothing, and your work of nothing: an abomination is he that chooses you."

Who is he talking to? He is talking to the idols. The challenge to these idols is to show us the future if you think you are God, show us what is going to happen, but the interesting part of the

challenge is the statement "Show us the former things that we can understand the latter end thereof."

I'm reminded of Solomon's words. You find them in the first chapter in Ecclesiastes beginning in verse nine. "The thing that has been, is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. {10} Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. {11} There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after."

Basically, what he is saying is why is there no remembrance of the former things? How come people don't look back and remember the things that took place? Just like the people in the generation that will follow this generation will not look back to what happened here and remember what happened now for the sake of the future. As someone once said, those who cannot remember the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. And so, it goes over and over and over again.

The Future Does Not Exist

He who would understand prophecy must not start with the future. I feel this is a fundamental mistake that so many people make when they begin to study prophecy.

First of all, you need to understand that prophecy and future are not the same thing. Prophecy exists, the future does not exist. Now one chief purpose of most prophets that you will find in the Bible is to determine future events. Do you know what I mean by that? Well, a prophet comes wandering into town and he says "Repent, turn away from your evil doings or the Lord shall destroy this place, you and all of your things and your children to the third and fourth generations." Why is that message being given. It is to change the here and now, in order that the future might be different as it otherwise would be. The implication is that if you do not repent, you will be destroyed. If you repent, you will not be destroyed, which immediately says that there are two quite different options that are available for the future. Does the future exist? No, it does not except as a concept in the mind. It is not here yet.

Prophecy Can Fail

Jesus said to a group of people "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish" Luke 13:3.

There's a choice involved. We're all familiar with the example of Jonah and Nineveh "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). But Nineveh repented and Nineveh was not overthrown. The prophet sees the future as a consequence of the present, just as the present is a consequence of the past.

The things that they did yesterday are determining the outcome that is going on around us today. The things that we are doing today will determine the things that are going to be taking place tomorrow. If we can change the present course of events, for some people, we can change the

future for those people. Hence prophecy. A prophet is sent in many cases to change the outcome of present events.

Now in some cases present events have gone along too far and the prophet has come to tell us the certainty of what is going to take place, because it's too late to change the outcome. But in most cases, a prophet is sent with bad news in love, in that the bad news and the bad situation might be averted.

He who would understand prophecy then must look back, not forward. In looking forward there's nothing to see because it is not there yet. Possibly the greatest source of error among many students of prophecy is the assumption that the future already exists and may be discovered in a sense that Columbus discovered America. The future does not exist. It is created from today's events and grows out of history.

The apostle Paul says in First Corinthians 13:2 "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. {8} "Love never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail."

Now you have to realize that if the future exists as a concrete predetermined course of events then prophecy cannot fail, because the only way that prophecy could fail would be if the prophecy itself were a lie. Do you follow me?

Prophecy can fail because the future does not yet exist but is oftentimes determined in and changed by what might have been because the prophecy had been given.

The Divided Kingdom

We have up to this point covered the first 80 years of what we call the divided kingdom, by that I mean the period of time subsequent to the death of Solomon in a time in which the kingdom of Israel was divided into two armed camps. The kingdom of Judah headquartered in Jerusalem and the kingdom of Israel headquartered later in Samaria. Prior to this time, it is a little bit vague as to where the headquarters of the ten northern tribes were. The kingdom of Judah was made up of Judah and Benjamin which stayed in the south.

We have been looking to try to understand the history of these events, the outcome of these events and somehow get a grip on what might be happening in the future. As we read the prophecies, we will begin to get a grasp of what the prophet is aiming at and understand the prophecy. If you can understand prophecy, then the events will make sense to you as they begin to take place before your very eyes.

King Ahab Repented

I want you to turn back with me now to First Kings 22:40. We come to a watershed in the history of Israel, because we get to the end of the reign of King Ahab, to whom it is said that he was the worst of any of the kings up to this time and he seems to have done worse than all the rest of

them before him and yet we learn of this king that when he repented at the warning of Elijah that God actually changed prophecy of the very serious dire threats that He had made against Ahab because he humbled himself, clothed himself in sackcloth and went softly (1 Kings 21:27-29). God said "Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before me? because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house" (1 Kings 21:29). And yet we also realize that if his son had repented, God would have said the same thing where the son was concerned until the curse could have been removed from Ahab's family forever had they continued to repent.

Now verse 40 of First Kings 22 "So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead. {41} And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel."

Chronological Sequence

Now you have to be careful as you read along in Kings and Chronicles to understand that these do not follow a clear chronological sequence because it is moving you back and forth between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Remember you're in the times of the divided kingdom. So first of all, it tells you about the death of Ahab, then it steps over into Judah, but it has to back up to about year 62 when Ahab died in year 80. We now come to the fourth year of Ahab when Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign in Judah.

Jehoshaphat Reigns In Judah

1 Kings 22:42 "Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. {43} He walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. {44} Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. {45} Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? {46} And the remnant of the gay community, that remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land." The New English Bible translates the word 'sodomites' as male prostitutes.

1 Kings 22:50 "Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father."

Jehoram Reigns in Judah and Ahaziah Reigns over Israel

1 Kings 22:50 "Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, reigned in his stead. {51} Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned two years over Israel."

Now we are back in the north again. Year 80 to 82 approximately. You are going to find if you carefully cross check the dates that I am giving you that there is some variance to them. The Assyrian chronology will vary from Ushers and Ushers is not entirely reliable because there is so

many ways to count interregnums and people whose reigns overlap someone else in the same kingdom. I am not trying to be precise in the chronology, only to give you a general feeling of the passage of time.

1 Kings 22:52 "And Ahaziah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: {53} For he served Baal, and worshiped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done."

As I have said before you will continue hearing this because it is repeated and repeated, "He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." This indictment was past upon the kings of Israel again and again and again.

Now continuing in 2 Kings 1:1 "Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. {2} And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. {3} But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that you go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? {4} Now therefore thus says the LORD, you shall not come down from that bed on which you are gone up but shall surely die. And Elijah departed."

We are in Israel, not Judah. You get some insight into Elijah's nature in the way in which the messages that God has are delivered through this man.

There is one thing that keeps coming home to me as I study through these passages. Here we are again living in a time when doubtless people were immoral as we are today, with all of the sins of the flesh that could possibly be in existence, even in Judah with male prostitutes being commonly found until the king got rid of all of them. But realizing all of this, what is incredible is that hardly any of the prophets seem to have anything to say about these sins of the flesh that the people were involved in.

The First Three Commandments

Again, again and again when the correction comes, when the prophetic intervention comes, it has to do with the First Commandment, the rejection of God, Himself, personally. It has to do with idolatry, the breaking of the Second Commandment. It's very interesting when you realize this, and I more recently began to realize that the carelessness that can creep into people's lives and their attitude toward God and their respect for Him, and respect for His name, to the point that you find people who will write a letter that will contain lies and will sign the letter 'In Jesus' Name'. I got one like that and it boggled my mind and I thought "Have people so little respect for God's name that they would sign His name to a letter in which Jesus would have nothing to do with the letter or anything to do with the person who wrote the letter, because of the way in which he has lived his life. I think that is a clear violation of the Third Commandment "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Inquiring of Another God

Here is an interesting situation. It is one thing to be unfaithful to God, it is another thing to flaunt it in His face. It is one thing to wander off from God, but it is another thing to deliberately go to Baalzebub the god of Ekron when there is a prophet of God just a few miles from you, in your own country, and you pass right by him to go Baalzebub the god of Ekron to inquire if you will recover from this disease.

You begin to see why God would get Elijah and send him out to intercept these men and turns them around and sends them back. Here again the whole question is: God, who is He? What is He? What does He stand for? Do you know Him? It is very interesting to see the approach that was taken here, once this man had gotten this message back.

2 Kings 1:5 "When the messengers turned back unto him, he said to them, Why are you now turned back? {6} And they said to him, There came a man up to meet us, and said to us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that you send to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? therefore you shall not come down from that bed on which you are gone up, but you shall surely die."

This is a case of going to another god.

Some have used this passage in the past to indicate that there is something wrong in going to a doctor but the absurdity of it becomes apparent very rapidly when you have a broken arm and you are in excruciating pain and you say "Am I going to pray that this arm will be reset and put itself back together again or am I going to go to the doctor and get it set, put in a plaster cast and get the pain stopped?" No one has a question about that do they?

Fire From Heaven

2 Kings 1:7 "Ahaziah said to them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? {8} And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said", like the voice of doom "It is Elijah the Tishbite. {9} Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him, You man of God, the king has said, Come down."

Do you catch the absurdity in that statement? "You man of God." How in the world could you believe that this man is of God who is sitting up on the side of this hill, and that I can tell him what to do? The sarcasm is very implicit in this statement "You man of God, the king has said, Come down," as though the king can give orders to a man of God. {10} "Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume you and your fifty. And there came down fire from heaven and consumed him and his fifty." Here was searing fire from heaven and then there was fifty-one charred bodies lying on

the road. This is a sobering thing to contemplate isn't it? God in heaven backed that up. Why was this done so severely and so strongly? Because of the contempt that was shown toward God through this whole episode. The utter and complete contempt, not of Elijah for he would not have considered himself important at all, because he said, "If I be a man of God, then let us all learn a lesson about God."

2 Kings 1:11 "Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly." They are still giving orders to the man of God.

2 Kings 1:12 "And Elijah answered and said to them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume you and your fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty." Now we have one hundred and two dead as a result of the failure to acknowledge that this indeed is a man of God and you don't try to tell God what to do.

2 Kings 1:13 "And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah." Now we're getting somewhere. Now somebody is coming to realize that there is a God in heaven and this man is a representative and messenger of God and not somebody else. The time has come for the captain to fall on his knees and he "besought him, and said to him, O man of God, I pray you, let my life, and the life of these fifty your servants, be precious in your sight." {14} "Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties: therefore, let my life now be precious in your sight." No commands, no demands, no assertions of power or kingly authority, just simply the recognition finally at long last that God was involved with all of this that was going on.

The Two Witnesses

I think that a lot of people perhaps in the process of studying the book of Revelation have overlooked an interesting connection. The connection between the two witnesses and Elijah. The two witnesses will have fire proceed out of their mouths and consume their enemies (Revelation 11:5-6) and they will stop heaven that it will not rain in the days of their prophecy for three- and one-half years. Elijah stopped the rain for three- and one-half years. People look ahead and do all kinds of speculation and wonder about the two witnesses and never go back and make the historic connection and never really realize who these people are and what their message is, what their work is, and what Elijah is supposed to do at the end time.

2 Kings 1:15 "And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose and went down with him to the king. {16} And he said to him, Thus says the LORD, Forasmuch as you have sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word? therefore you shall not come down off that bed on which you have gone up, but shall surely die. {17} So he died." He died because he looked to another god other than the true God. The healing was almost irrelevant to the whole thing in his illness and the question was that of idolatry.

Jehoram Reigns In Israel

"Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son" (2 Kings 1:17).

There are two Jehorams that will be reigning at the same time and this is a little confusing, but the Jehoram in Judah was the regent from the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat which would be around the year 79. This was one of those situations where you have an overlap in the two kings that existed at the same time, so consequently your chronology tends to get jerked out of position a little bit if you are not careful when you go through here.

2 Kings 1:18 "Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"

Elijah Prepares to Leave

Second Kings chapter two is a particularly fascinating segment of the Bible and it has drawn a lot of attention over the years from students of prophecy and students of the Bible and people have wondered and speculated about some of the things that took place.

2 Kings 2:1 "It came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal." Now this is somewhere around year 84 of the divided kingdom. Ahab has been dead for about two years.

Verse 2 "Elijah said to Elisha, Wait here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to Bethel." Now what is interesting about this is that there are two or three occasions here where Elijah seems to try to get rid of Elisha. He wants him to stay behind and he keeps telling him to stay here while he goes somewhere else.

Verse 2 "Elisha said to him, As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. So, they went down to Bethel. {3} The sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said to him, Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from you today? He said, Yes, I know it. {4} Elijah said to him, Elisha, stay here, I pray you for the LORD has sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. So, they came to Jericho. {5} The sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Don't you know that the LORD will take away your master from you to day? And he answered, Yes I know it."

2 Kings 2:6 "Elijah said to him, Wait, I pray you, here; for the LORD has sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you. They two went on. {7} And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. {8} Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that they two went over on dry ground. {9} It came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken away from you. Elisha said, I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. {10} And he said, you have asked a hard thing."

You Have Asked a Hard Thing

You know when I think about that I say what did he mean by that? Did he mean that it was a hard thing for God to do? Well of course not. Nothing like that would be hard for God to do. In what sense is it a hard thing? Well, do you suppose that Elijah's spirit was ever a burden to him? Do you suppose that there were times that he lay awake at night and couldn't sleep because of the things that he had to do? Because of the people that were dead because of the word that God had spoken through him?

Was he being a man so insensitive that he could witness the fiery death of fifty men and not be moved by it? Was he the sort of man who would have been torn up by the personal rejection that often comes to a prophet of God? Here was this young man looking at him, for Elisha will after Elijah is taken away, continue to work another fifty-eight years as a prophet. If you think about this you will realize he was asking for a double dose of the spirit of one of the most powerful prophets, the archetype of all prophets, a man who was a bearer of bad news almost exclusively, a man who carried a very heavy burden around on his shoulders most of his life. He was probably hated by more people by a long shot than loved him.

Elijah said: "Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you; but if not, it shall not be so." (2 Kings 2:10).

It was not an absolutely predetermined iron clad event that it would happen so.

A Chariot of Fire

2 Kings 2:11 "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."

By heaven it means the heaven or atmosphere above us here on the earth. I won't go into it now, but there was a letter received much later, about ten years later, from this event from Elijah which shows that he was still alive somewhere else on the earth at this time (2 Chronicles 21:12-20). His prophetic work, his mission in Israel, was over at this particular point in time.

"Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. {12} And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces."

I can imagine that he was absolutely devastated in going through this experience. How would you feel standing there and having this happen?

Elisha looked at his feet and {13} "He took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; {14} And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him."

The mantle that Elijah was wearing did not fall upon Elisha but fell upon the ground. He reached over and picked it up and went over to the Jordan River.

I think it is rather interesting to think about this and ponder it. This is a very rare instance in the Bible of prophetic succession, where a prophet legitimately succeeds another straight in the office of the preceding prophet, for Elisha has no separate ministry. He actually continues in greater power in the ministry of Elijah. He is not somebody different, figuratively speaking. Elisha's name is similar to Elijah as we have noticed.

Elisha stands by the river at this point in time, without a single doubt in his mind of the power that he has. He takes the mantle that fell from Elijah and he "smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted here and there: and Elisha went over."

The new young prophet comes back and for fifty-eight years to follow, this man will do exploits that will pale into insignificance at times the things that Elijah did. For those who thought that Elijah was getting old and they wouldn't have to put up with him much longer would have been dismayed to realize that now we have a younger man and the spirit is still here and the same attitude is still here, and the same power is still there, and it would seem that it was even more so.

Fifty-eight years, all the way to the one hundred and forty-second year approximately of the divided kingdom, this man will work and prophesy.

2 Kings 2:15 "When the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha. They came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him." They were not doing obeisance to Elisha for he was a man, but they realized that the power and the spirit of God rested upon him and they stood in incredible awe of that power.

Jehoram Reigns over Israel

2 Kings 3:1 "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned twelve years."

We are in the northern kingdom and this is about year 82 to 94 from the beginning of the divided kingdom.

Let's continue on in verse 2 "He worked evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. {3} Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. {4} Mesha king of Moab was a sheep master, and rendered to the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. {5} But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. {6} And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time and numbered all Israel." Now this question of numbering all of Israel, essentially what he is talking about is conscription and not a census. The idea of numbering Israel and knowing how many people you have out there is no big deal. But the point is that he was numbering them for war, which means conscription which requires a military draft.

2 Kings 3:7 "He went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: will you go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up." Here is a rare occasion where we have Israel and Judah together in a battle.

"I am as you as you are, my people as your people, and my horses as your horses. {8} And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. {9} So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. {10} And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD has called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!" Here they are out there with no water and they were in sore distress.

Verse 11 "Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the kings of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. {12} Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to Elisha." {13} Elisha said to the king of Israel, What have I to do with you? get to the prophets of your father, and to the prophets of your mother. The king of Israel said to him, No: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. {14} And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward you, nor see you."

He had absolute total contempt for the king of Israel, but he did respect Jehoshaphat, not because he was righteous, but because the kingdom of Judah had not deserted him the way that the kingdom of Israel had done.

He goes on to say: {15} "But now bring me a minstrel."

Minstrel Needed to Prophecy

2 Kings 3:15 "It came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. {16} And he said, Thus says the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches." Now proceeds a fascinating prophecy. What is really interesting here is the fact that before he could prophesy, he had to have a minstrel. The language here is filled with imagery and is highly symbolic.

I think that people do not understand prophecy, not only because they don't understand the history, but they do not understand the literary form in which the prophecy is actually cast, nor do they recognize that when they read through the Psalms, they are reading prophecy after prophecy after prophecy. Most of them are prophecies that were done by someone when the minstrel played, and the hand of the Lord came upon him and he prophesied before the people that were there. It finds its way into the Bible as poetry and is read as a lovely poem like one who sings upon a pleasant instrument and people never realize that it is prophecy that can have life and death value to them if they could simply understand the language and structure, the feeling that this particular poem is intended to convey to them in the warning.

The King of Israel has a Victory

The result of all of this was that water came through this valley and filled all of the ditches. The kings of Moab looked out and because the sunrise was on it thought it was blood and they came rushing down unprepared and were destroyed and went back in total defeat.

This was the result of what took place at this particular incident. It suited God on this occasion to give even the king of Israel a victory for reasons that He does not explain.

There is Money in Oil

In 2 Kings chapter 4 "There cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets to Elisha, saying, Your servant my husband is dead; and you know that your servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. {2} And Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? tell me, what do you have in the house?"

What happened in this situation was she had a cruise of oil and Elisha told her to go get pots and pans and to bring every vessel that she could find into the house, then close the doors, and start pouring them full. When she got through, she had filled every vessel in the house with oil and she still had the original container that was full. He told her to go and sell all of the oil, pay all of her debts, and live on the residue thereof. This was quite a blessing that came to her. An interesting little side light, if you had been sent out to gather pots and pans without realizing what was going to happen, would you have gathered ten? Would you have stopped at twenty? Would you have gone on to eighty? Would you have been satisfied with one hundred and twenty? Where would you have stopped in the gathering of pots and pans before you went into the house and closed the door and began to pour the oil?

You find this little incident that takes place and wonder why it's in the Bible? You will find one later that has a similar import to it as to when you are told to do something, do it with all you might. Work hard at it. Carry it out to the limit because it could be critical for you in the long run as to how it will work out.

Hospitality is Rewarded

What is interesting in this is that, it says in 2 Kings 4:8 "It fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where there was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so, it was, that as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat bread."

Because he was staying there a lot, she asked her husband and he agreed, and they prepared a permanent room for Elisha when he was there. It was a simple room with a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. It was a place that he knew he could come on a regular basis. One day he called the woman in and asked, "What can I do for you?" She didn't know what to ask but because of the time and because of being able to understand, Elisha realized what she most desired and he told her that she was going to have a son, which indeed she did. In the process of time the child went out to the reapers and apparently got sun stroke and the child died. She was torn up completely by it and she went to Elisha and he came and when he got to the child he was beyond resuscitation.

2 Kings 4:34 "Elisha went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child grew warm. {35} Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."

What's particularly significant is that Elisha joins the very rare ranks of men who has raised somebody from the dead. This man had a tremendous amount of power. He goes on and performs many miracles and you would find them very interesting if you were to study them. In this segment going all the way down to chapter eight, I think merits your careful study and pondering to see the type of things that God did, through the power of Elisha. He had done so many things and yet none of these types of things seem to have happened at all when Elijah was a prophet. It seems that he was just a preacher, where Elisha was a miracle worker of the first order.

Naaman the Leper

Another incidence was the example of Naaman (2 Kings 5) who was a leper and he came all of the way to Israel to be healed of his leprosy and interestingly enough this example is quoted in the New Testament (Luke 4:27). There were all sorts of lepers in Israel in these days and none of them were healed except Naaman of Syria. Trying to underline the fact that oftentimes it is the Gentiles who will listen to God, whereas Israel would not listen to Him.

Hazael to be King over Syria

Come on down with me to 2 Kings 8:7 "Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it had told him, saying, The man of God is come here. {8} And the king said to Hazael, Take a present in your hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?" This is a different approach, this was a Gentile, who recognized that Elisha was a prophet.

2 Kings 8:9 "Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Your son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to you, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? {10} And Elisha said to him, Go, say unto him, You may certainly recover: however, the LORD has showed me that he shall surely die."

That's strange isn't it? Why in the world would He send a message back and say to the man "You may surely recover" when he knew that God had shown him that he was surely going to die. The answer is really quite simple, as you continue to read on.

2 Kings 8:11 "Elisha settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. {12} And Hazael said, Why are you weeping my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: their strong holds will you set on fire, and their young men you will slay with the sword, and will dash their children, and rip up their women with child. {13} And Hazael said, But what, is your servant a dog, that he should do this

great thing? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath showed me that you shall be king over Syria. {14} So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to you? And he answered, He told me that you will surely recover. {15} And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead."

When Hazael found out that the king of Syria would recover there was no alternative for him but to get rid of the old man in whatever way he could get rid of him.

Hazael will become a major factor in the future history of these two peoples as the king of Syria continually vexes the kingdom of Israel.

Jehoram Reigns in Judah

2 Kings 8:16 "In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign." Now we are shifted back to Judah. We are dealing with year 89 approximately up to the year 97 from the beginning of the divided kingdom.

Verse 17 "Thirty-two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. {18} And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab."

This is one of the rare incidences of a king of Judah who follows that way. Why did he do it? Because "the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. {19} Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him always a light, and to his children. {20} In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah and made a king over themselves. {21} So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents. {22} Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day."

What is pictured by all of this is the gradual erosion of the kingdom that David had built up. David had conquered all of these nations around about. He had created a very large buffer zone around him. He managed to keep a lot of these people, who were warlike and troublesome people, at peace with themselves and peace with their neighbors year after year after year.

But once the kingdom was divided, once the kingdom began to forget God, became corrupt, they slowly but surely began to lose control of all of the power that they had at the international level. This was not an insignificant thing when we began to discuss prophecy and the long-term implications of current events.

Ahaziah Reigns in Judah

2 Kings 8:25 "In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign." We are up to around year 101 to 102 from the time of the divided kingdom.

Verse 26 "Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel."

Now we are getting down to talking about some of these people from up north who had intermarried down in the south and brought their customs with them.

Verse 27 "He walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab. {28} And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramothgilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram. {29} King Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick."

Jehu Anointed King over Israel

Now in chapter nine, a rather remarkable incident takes place. We have gone away from Judah and are now back up in Israel.

2 Kings 9:1 "Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up your loins, and take this box of oil in your hand, and go to Ramothgilead: {2} When you come there, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; {3} Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus says the LORD, I have anointed you king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. "

This is so abrupt in the message that is going to take place here. You could imagine the reaction when this guy comes in and takes a box of oil, pours it on your head, and says, "The Lord has anointed you king over Israel" and out the door he goes. Why? What's the rush in all of this? Let's read some more of the account.

Verse 4 "The young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramothgilead. {5} And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to you, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of us? And he said, To you, O captain."

Now this gives you an idea of who this man was, he was not the captain of all of the host, he was one of several.

Verse 6 "He arose and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. {7} You shall smite the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. {8} For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him every male, and him that is shut up and left 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} The dogs shall

eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door and fled."

I don't know how you would have felt, but I would have been absolutely astonished if I had been standing there and if some guy came in and without me knowing anything nor having any impulse, and being one of a whole bunch of captains, having that kind of a message pronounced to me.

Verse 11 "Jehu came forth." He was probably looking a little bit astonished to the men who had been around him before the prophet came there at the realization of what had been done to him and the realization to what he had been called upon to do.

God Chooses People

I have often thought that God chooses people, but He doesn't make people into what they are, but He chooses people sometimes because of the kind of person they are. I think He chose Elijah because he was a man of few words, an abrupt man, who got straight to the point and then got out. He wasn't the sort of person to mince words or to soft pedal anything he had to say. God had a certain type of message He wanted preached and wanted certain things done so He used Elijah and not someone else.

Now comes the task that must be done, a rather unpleasant task, and He seems to have chosen a man to do it, who was suited for the task.

Jehu to be King over Israel

2 Kings 9:11 "Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to you? And he said unto them, You know the man, and his communication." I don't know if he was assuming at this point that they had put him up to it or this was a joke.

Verse 12 "They said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spoke he to me, saying, Thus says the LORD, I have anointed you king over Israel." {13} "Then they hurried, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king. {14} So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Now Joram had kept Ramothgilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria. {15} King Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. Jehu said, If it be your minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel. {16} So Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram. {17} There stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. Joram said, Take a horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace? {18} So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? Jehu said, What have you to do with peace? turn in behind me. The watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he didn't come back. {19} Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? Jehu answered,

What have you to do with peace? turn behind me. {20} The watchman told, saying, He came to them, and didn't come back: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he drives furiously. {21} "Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. {22} It came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu?" Which is amazing that by this time that he would not know.

Verse 22: "He answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? {23} And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah. {24} Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot." Apparently, he drove the arrow completely through his body.

Verse 25 "Then Jehu said to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: remember how that, when I and you rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; {26} Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will repay you in this plot of ground."

Do you remember, this is precisely what had to happen to Ahab because of the way he stole the vineyard and because the way his wife Jezebel arranged the murder of this man Naboth.

Verse 26: The LORD said "Now therefore take and cast him into the plot of ground, according to the word of the LORD. {27} But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. They did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo and died there." This is one of the rare instances where the kingdom changes hands in the same day. The king of Judah died on the same day that the king of Israel died.

2 Kings 9:28 "And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem and buried him in his sepulcher with his fathers in the city of David. {29} And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah."

Death of Jezebel

2 Kings 9:30 "When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and adorned her head, and looked out at a window. {31} As Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? {32} And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. {33} And he said, Throw her down. So, they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trampled her under foot. {34} And when he was come in, he did eat and drink."

He ate meal. He left her body lying out in the street. This is a strange circumstance and is foreign to our thought for most of us to consider this.

After he ate a meal he said "Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. {35} They went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet,

and the palms of her hands. {36} Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: {37} And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

He didn't intend for tour guides, as it were, to point that this is where Jezebel is buried. Her body was to be scattered hither and yon to wherever it was.

This is all extremely frightening when you see the incredible violence that is ensuing in this particular circumstance for what this man will now do.

Ahab's 70 Sons Beheaded

2 Kings 10:1 "Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children." The whole group of them, each one got his own letter.

Jehu wrote "Now as soon as this letter comes to you, seeing your master's sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armor; {3} Choose the best and qualified of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house."

He is actually telling them, you have all of the sons of Ahab there, what I want you to do is to take one and declare him king and let's get down to the business of fighting this war. Defend yourselves.

Verse 4 "They were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand? {5} He that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and those who reared up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are your servants, and will do all that you shall bid us; we will not make any king: do you that which is good in your eyes. {6} Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If you be mine, and if you will listen to my voice, take you the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by tomorrow at this time. Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up. {7} It came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew them, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him them to Jezreel."

This is an incredible story, and even though it was prophesied that it had to happen, it is still mind boggling to think in terms of baskets full of heads.

2 Kings 10:8 "There came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until morning. {9} It came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, You be righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these?"

In essence he is saying "You people are no better than I am." He pulled them into his own attitude and frame of mind and he trapped them into a situation to where they could no longer criticize him for having killed his master, for indeed they themselves had slain their master's sons. This is a terribly grisly scene.

Statement from Hosea

Let's turn over to Hosea for an interesting statement. Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom writing considerably later than this. He says: Hosea 1:1 "The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. {2} The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD. {3} So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived and bare him a son. {4} And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel."

He is hearkening back to the events of Jehu and what he did. What follows is interesting. Continuing in verse 4: "For yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel."

Now why having given Jehu this commission would God then in turn avenge all of that blood upon him? The only thing I can conclude is that the man while he was told that he had a certain mission to carry out, he carried it out so much further than God had ever intended even to the destruction of the king of Judah, whom he had not been instructed, that he had brought this blood and vengeance upon himself and upon his own house.

Breaking God's Commandments

What is fascinating about this, is that while up until this time, the thing that you read again and again about the sins of the northern tribes of Israel are about idolatry and the continual departing from God and His ways, the setting up of a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the setting up of calves in Bethel and Dan, the setting up of the priests of the lowest of the people, that again and again and again it is the departing from God and seeking other gods which is the breaking of the First Commandment and finally we have come to a place where the violence has reached such a fever pitch that this kind of an outburst of bloodshed takes place in the land and the man who perpetrates it continues to serve as king in the land for approximately twenty eight years following this period of time. This was a very bloody time.

What seems to be taking place is the abandonment of the First Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your mind, with all of your heart, and with all of your soul and your strength" (Matthew 22:37). Which then in the years to follow led to a total abandonment of the Second Commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself"(Matthew 22:39). Now we are beginning to see the incredible buildup of violence that takes place in this land that eventually leads to four of the last five leaders of the nation dying by the hand of their successor or by an assassin. It is mind boggling to realize how deep seated the whole trend that

violence became in this people as a result of their having turned away from God and His law and the things that He commanded them to do.

Worshippers of Baal Executed

One of the next things that Jehu does is that he calls all of the priests of Baal together and deceitfully says: 2 Kings 10:18 "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. {19} Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests."

Jehu gathered together all of the worshippers of Baal in the house of Baal, packed nose to nose and shoulder to shoulder. He put all of his soldiers around this building and told them to start at the entrances and go through and kill them all and not to let a single one of them escape. The soldiers went through the temple of Baal and destroyed everybody. Here was more blood and more violence. The legacy of this violence was going to haunt this nation to the day that it ceased to be a nation.

2 Kings 10:28 "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. {29} However from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. {30} The LORD said to Jehu, Because you have done well in executing that which is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. {31} But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

As a consequence, the fact that he did one, two or three good things made no difference. All of the blood that he shed seems to be brought back to his account.

Israel Cut Short

In 2 Kings 10:32 there is an interesting statement that is made "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short."

This seems to be the beginning of the time of taking away their power, a destruction of their international influence, a time when God begins to lay the groundwork for their eventual fall as a nation.

Continuing in verse 32 "Hazeal smote them in all the coasts of Israel; {33} From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan. {34} Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? {35} And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead."

This is about year 125 from the time of the beginning of the divided kingdom.

Jehu Kills Ahaziah's Son

Now we go back to the time when Jehu killed Ahaziah's son. 2 Kings 11:1 "Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal seed."

She went out and killed all of the royal children except for one that was hidden from her who survived all of this and his name was Joash. Joash would eventually reign in Israel. This account is found in Chapter 11.

Jehoahaz Reigns Over Israel

I want to pass on down to 2 Kings 13 and verse 1 "In the twenty third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria and reigned seventeen years. {2} He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. {3} The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all their days. {4} Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD listened to him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. {5} The LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as before time."

They had relief for a short period of time, even though the king was evil, and he did not turn from his evil doings, he still cried out to God for relief and God was moved by the oppression that Israel was suffering and He gave them some peace, but {6} "they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria." In other words, worshiping in the grove was idolatry, but they still continued doing evil.

Verse 7 "Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them and had made them like the dust by threshing. {8} Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? {9} Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria."

Joash Reigns in Israel

Joash, Jehoahaz's son, reigned in his stead. 2 Kings 13:10 "In the thirty seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria and reigned sixteen years."

Here goes another sixteen-year reign of the same story of on again and off again of service to God, the evil being done in the sight of God, the refusal to return from the sins of Jeroboam. As it says in verse 11 "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein. {12} And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" {13} And Joash slept with his fathers."

Jeroboam II Reigns Over Israel

2 Kings 13:13 "Jeroboam sat upon Joash's throne." This is Jeroboam II. We have come full circle in a way. Jeroboam II now reigns on the throne carrying the same name as the man who started all of this in the first place.

Elisha Dies

2 Kings 13: 14 "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died." People often talk about sickness as being a curse from the Lord, but it would be strange indeed for us to look at Elisha this way. This is the end of a fifty-eight-year ministry. He is an old man. All of us are going to die of something sooner or later and in his case, he fell sick of a sickness of which he died.

Let's continue in verse 14 "Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. {15} Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. {16} He said to the king of Israel, Put your hand upon the bow. He put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. {17} He said, Open the window eastward. 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 shall smite the Syrians in Aphek, till you have consumed them. {18} He said, Take the arrows. He took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote three times and stopped. {19} And the man of God was angry with him, and said, You should have smitten five or six times; then you would have smitten Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you shall smite Syria but three times."

Remember the little incidence of the pots of oil and the pouring in and how many do you bring in? Then the prophet comes along and tells you to smite the ground but doesn't say how many times. He struck the ground three times and Elisha said you will smite Syria three times.

2 Kings 13:20 "Elisha died, and they buried him. The bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. {21} And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the dead body of the man into the sepulcher of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet."

Now this is rather fascinating. Do you suppose that there was some magic in his bones? If you could find them now today and if you touched them could you be healed? No, of course not. There was no magic in those bones. When this man touched Elisha's bones, God in heaven decided to bring that man back to life. Why would God do that? What's the purpose of that?

Spirit of Elijah

The point is that the spirit of Elijah was not dead. Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit. The spirit of Elijah continued in Elisha. The spirit would continue as God Himself was still alive, His power was still alive, and it would yet exist. The interesting thing about it is that we

are told that Elijah the prophet will be sent at the time of the end. Elijah and Elisha were men and they died.

Why was Elijah taken away in a fiery chariot to some place? God let him get old and die like He let Elisha die. Why was this done this way? The whole symbolism is that the spirit of Elijah would not die. That spirit would survive and find expression again and again and again and particularly at the very end time. Now we all know, that he was dead and buried. We all know that the man who came and was called John the Baptist was not Elijah (Matthew 17:12-13). He was not the same person. He did not have the same finger prints and did not have the same face. We also know that he did have same spirit of Elijah. The spirit of Elijah did not die. There will be a man in the end time who will come in the spirit of Elijah and will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest he come and smite the earth with utter destruction (Malachi 4:5-6).

This event, the raising of a dead man with mere contact with Elisha 's bones, has to be highly symbolic. It was done by God to convey a message again for the survival of the spirit beyond the physical life, the life and breath, of a single human being.

We come again to another water shed and there will be a short period of time with no evident powerful prophet, but now we are moving very closely into the realm of the first writing prophet to come on the scene. His name is Amos and he will be writing and dealing with the Ten Northern Tribes, but he is going to have to wait till the next time.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about Isaiah 41:23-24?
2. Do you find it interesting that even in Solomon's time people didn't look to the former things?
3. How does neglecting to understand the former things negatively affect society and Christianity?
4. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's point that the future does not exist?
5. Have you ever considered how hard it may have been for Elijah?
6. Where do you think Elijah was taken?

7. What do you the "Chariot of Fire" was?
8. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's idea that the reason Jehu gets rebuked by God is that he took his commission from God too far?
9. Have you ever studied the Northern Kingdom in depth?
10. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's explanation of why the dead body was revived after touching Elisha's bones?