

### Kings Jehoahaz & Jehoash of Israel; Elisha's Last Miracle & Death

#### 2 Kings 13

**2 Kings 13:1-9** - *"In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He did not depart from them.*

*Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. So Jehoahaz pleaded with the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. Then the Lord the LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as before. Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the wooden image also remained in Samaria. For He left of the army of Jehoahaz only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers; for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing.*

*Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Jehoahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Joash his son reigned in his place."*

#### Background Notes for 2 Kings 13

The theme of 2 Kings is the decline of Israel and Judah - the sad histories of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In 2 Kings 13, we have the accounts of Jehoahaz and Jehoash, two kings of the northern kingdom. They were both bad kings, as were **all nineteen kings** of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Jehoahaz was the son of Jehu, and he reigned for seventeen years. Jehoahaz *"did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin. He did not depart from them"* (v2). Remember, Jeroboam was the first king of the northern kingdom, who reigned immediately after the split of the united kingdom. He committed the terrible sin of setting up two golden calf idols in shrines, one in the north and one in the south of Israel. He ordained his own line of priests that were not in the line of Aaron. He is known in the biblical record as **"the king who made Israel sin."**

Because Jehoahaz continued to practice the sins of Jeroboam, and encouraged idolatry in his kingdom by keeping the Asherah idol, God permitted the king of Syria to continually defeat and oppress Israel. Jehoahaz's cavalry was reduced to fifty horsemen and ten chariots - not a strong military force, for sure! Under Syrian oppression, Israel became *"like the dust at threshing"* (v7) - so weak that they could easily be blown away.

## **Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 13:1-9**

### **1. God provides deliverance, even when we don't deserve it.**

Verses 4-6 form a parenthesis of God's grace in the midst of moral and spiritual decline. Israel was greatly oppressed by the Syrians because of her idolatry, but in His grace, God provided a "deliverer" when Jehoahaz pleaded with the Lord (v4).

Who was the "deliverer"? We don't know. He may have been the next king, Jehoash, who recovered some of Israel's lost territory (v25), or he may have been Jeroboam II, who followed Jehoash. Jeroboam II was militarily strong, and Israel had great material prosperity under his reign. So maybe the deliverer was Jeroboam II. But the deliverer of verse 5 may even have been one of the Assyrian kings, because at this time, the Assyrians brought pressure to bear on Ben-Hadad and the Syrians. So this would have brought a measure of peace to the northern kingdom of Israel.

By the way, don't confuse the **Syrians** and the **Assyrians**. The Syrians were directly to the north of Israel (where Syria is today); the Assyrian Empire's capital was farther to the east (in the area of Iraq today). When the Assyrians oppressed the Syrians, it brought relief to Israel. The Assyrians didn't care about Israel, but you know the saying: "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." It was that kind of relationship and scenario. So maybe one of Assyrian kings was the deliverer.

We don't know who God used, but the lesson is obvious: God provides deliverance even when we don't deserve it. Israel continued in her spiritual and moral decline. Even though, by His grace, the Lord had answered the king's prayers, King Jehoahaz did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam! In fact, he allowed a large image of the female deity Asherah to remain standing in the capital city of Samaria

So often we see the same pattern in our own nation. God provides deliverance from various threats when the people cry out to Him, but once the threat is over, the people return to their same old ways. God provides deliverance even when we don't deserve it.

**2 Kings 13:10-25** – *"In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them.*

*Now the rest of the acts of Joash, all that he did, and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Joash rested with his fathers. Then Jeroboam sat on his throne. And Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel."*

*Elisha had been suffering from a fatal illness. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over him, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some*

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

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

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

## **Doctrinal Point for 2 Kings 13:10-25**

### **God provides victory in accordance with our commitment.**

The history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah gets a little confusing at this point, because there were two kings named Jehoash (Joash), one from the northern kingdom, and one from the southern kingdom. Not only that, their reigns overlapped for a couple of years. So to avoid confusion, I always refer to the king from the southern kingdom of Judah as "Joash," and the king from the northern kingdom of Israel as "Jehoash."

After a summary of the reign of Jehoash of Israel was given in verses 10-13, an event from the life of King Jehoash was presented. As Elisha was nearing death, Jehoash visited the prophet. At this point, about 45 years had passed since the last mention of Elisha in 2 Kings. When Jehoash said to Elisha, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" (v14), most likely he was acknowledging that Elisha, like Elijah before him, was the moral strength and backbone of the nation at that time.

Elisha gave Jehoash a symbolic lesson that the king would certainly have understood. King Jehoash was to shoot an arrow out a window, with Elisha's hands on the king's hands to symbolize the Lord's victory over Syria. Then Jehoash was to strike the ground with the arrows, again to symbolize victory over the Syrians. But Jehoash only struck the ground three times, without much intensity. Elisha told him that because of his lack of commitment and zeal, Israel's victory over Syria would be limited to three strikes (v25).

The lesson for us should be obvious. God provides victory in our spiritual warfare in accordance with the strength of our commitment to Him. Don't expect victory in spiritual warfare if you're just a ho-hum Sunday-morning-only Christian. Some zeal and commitment to walking with the Lord must be evident in your life. (We're not talking about salvation here, but victory in spiritual warfare in our lives.)

Let me ask you: Are you experiencing defeat in your Christian life right now? Are you full of discouragement and doubt? Do you want victory? God provides victory in accordance with the strength of our commitment.

## **Practical Application**

### **Let's leave a spiritual legacy to future generations!**

*"Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet." (v20-21).*

This is a little-known miracle in the Bible. You probably didn't remember this miracle in Elisha's record, right? This miracle reminds us somewhat about what the Bible says about Abel in Hebrews 11:4: *"And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead."*

What kind of spiritual legacy do you want to leave for your family and for future generations? A spiritual legacy - or only material things? Will your testimony live on and affect others after you die? Will there still be spiritual power at work because of your godly life of commitment to the Lord, and to serving Him? Or will you be gone and forgotten, leaving no spiritual legacy? Let's be committed to leaving a spiritual legacy for future generations!