

Elisha

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The hidden power of heaven revealed.

2 Kings 6:8-20.

Background to this story.

The land of Elisha had been involved in a long civil war, the Nation of Israel had split into a northern area and a southern area, each area having their own capital city and king. The Northern kingdom had leaders who turned against the worship of God. God did not reject them, instead He raised up many prophets like Elijah. It was also very dangerous to have communication with the Lord in those days, God was revealing what was happening in other places to His servants.

The king of Syria, Ben-hadad was the enemy of Israel and had been testing the defence of Israel. Ben-hadad was secretly moving his armies from place to place but each time Jehoram, the king of Israel was also moving his soldiers to the same place to await the Syria army. Elisha is involved because he was revealing to the king of Israel, through God, what the king of Syria was planning.

Ben-hadad was furious, how did the king of Israel anticipate his plans? Who is leaking the information? The servants were the most obvious suspect and were summoned to the king. None are guilty but an unknown servant has the answer, "O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." We are not told how the servant knew about Elisha but Ben-hadad is determined to capture Elisha and sends a great army to the town of Dothan where Elisha was living at the time. Under the cover of darkness the Syrian army slipped past the Israel army and surrounded the sleeping town.

The next morning Elisha's servant gets a shock, this is not Gehazi, all he can see was rows of soldiers, chariots and archers surrounding the city. The servant had one reaction, turning to Elisha he said "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" , all he could see was soldiers about to destroy the city and people. The king of Syria obviously had not thought his action through, if Elisha had know all his previous actions he certainly would have know of this 'surprise attack.' He was not just fighting Elisha, the prophet of God, he was therefore also fighting God.

Elisha very calmly replied "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha can see not just the soldiers but also the angelic host, the armies of God, hidden to the human eye but visible to Elisha, he then prays "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." The city is surrounded by an angelic host sent to guard Elisha. The servant is amazed.

The Syrian army moves to attack, Elisha has the answer, in prayer, "Lord, Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." Elisha then approaches the Syrian army, "this is not the right city, I will take you to the man you seek" The Bible indicates that the soldiers were not totally blind because they were able to follow Elisha, they seemed to not be able to see their real surroundings, their sight was so altered that they did not know the persons and places where they were. verse 18.

Elisha now leads the Syrian army from the town of Dothan to the city of Samaria, where the king of Israel is waiting, on arrival Elisha asks God to now open their eyes, what a shock awaits them surrounded by the army of Israel, the king turns to Elisha, "let me kill them now," " No," said Elisha, "you would not kill any soldiers who you caught in a battle, feed them and send them back to their leader," consider the thought of Proverbs 25:21,22. As a result no more Syrian raiders entered Israel.

God is totally in control, each day is a countless miracle for Him, as He guards His people from the visible and invisible dangers,

read Romans 8:28-39;

2 Corinthians 10:3-6;

1 John 4:4-6;

1 John 5:18;

Hebrews 13 5,6;

Philippians 4:19.

Ben-Hadad king of Syria attacks again and the result.

2 Kings 6:24-33.

Ben-Hadad king of Syria has to prove himself to his people so attacks with his full army, Joram is totally unprepared, perhaps the peace on his borders with Syria had made him think he would have no more threats from Syria,

The Syrians surrounded Samaria for a very long time and the city was starving. verse 33 suggests that Elisha had advised Joram to wait on the Lord. It appears that God for some reason had not acted, possibly as punishment for turning against Him, for not living up to His covenant.

If we look at the following references we can see that the possible punishments by God for rejecting Him were often military defeat,

Leviticus 26:17,25,33,36-39;

Deuteronomy 28:25-26,49-52

Or famine,

Leviticus 26:26,29;

Deuteronomy 28:17,48.

At the time Israel was suffering both. All king Joram needed to do was to tell the people to turn back to God in prayer and worship, repent, ask for forgiveness and God would take the necessary action,

2 Chronicles 7:14.

Instead the people in the city were eating anything that they could find, "a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five shekels of silver," verse 25.

What was even worse they were eating their own children.

See Leviticus 26:29;

Deuteronomy 28:53-57,

This indicates that this action was also a possible punishment.

King Joram is walking on the city wall and meets two women, one calls for help by the king, all Joram does was blame the Lord not the nations evil. But the woman wanted justice, they had agreed to eat each others children but the second woman had not kept her part of the bargain, she had hidden the child.

Joram only blamed God and Elijah for the situation, tears his clothes in anger to reveal that he was wearing sackcloth as a sign of humility, but there was no humility, no repentance so this act was meaningless. The king then sends a messenger to Elisha to arrest him, and then kill him. Elisha had already been told by God so as he is sitting in the house with the city elders, who had come for help, he comments on the soon to arrive messenger and the fact that the king would come soon after to make sure of the execution.

King Joram was the son of the evil king Ahab, he was not a descendent of king David, so Elisha had no respect for him.

Elisha tells the elders to hold the door shut until the king also arrives. Being prevented from destroying Elisha did not go down to well with Joram, all he did was blame God. Then he decided that he was taking over and would not wait for God to respond. Still no repentance!!

Good news from God, plenty of food for the starving in Samaria.

2 Kings 7:1

Whether king Joram was allowed into Elisha we are not told, but God was already at work with a message through Elisha, "Tomorrow about this time," what would happen? Plenty of food would be available. The soldier with the king laughs at the message, "it would have to rain food!" Elisha then tells the soldier that he will see it but not eat of it, because he will die during the day. The soldier's hard heart was also to be punished,

2 Kings 7:17

God is at work.

2 Kings 7:3-16.

The story moves outside the city. There we find four lepers who are living in isolation so they had no food, see Leviticus 13:26,36.

They knew nothing of the last message from God, so decided to go into the Syrian army, be fed in pity by the Syrians or be killed by their swords.

As it was getting dark the lepers go down into the Syrian camp, they were hoping that there may not be so many guards, but there was nobody there at all!! What has happened?

Earlier God had made the Syrians hear the noise of an approaching army, the noise indicated it was very large, the Syrians had fled the camp, leaving everything behind. The lepers eat all they could, robbed all the tents, then eventually decided to tell the city, realizing that the people of the city would punish them for not telling them of all the food now available.

The lepers tell the guards and eventually the king is told. The king thought it was a trap, he has no faith in the message from God. The servants suggest that he sends a few soldiers, with the remaining horses, to investigate, if it was a trap, then they would be killed, anyway they would die if they remained in the city, nothing would be lost.

The soldiers find the Syrian camp empty, they follow the route of the fleeing soldiers, all they found was equipment and clothes, thrown off by the Syrians, so they could travel faster. They followed the route 25 miles to the Jordan River, the Syrian army had gone. There was now plenty of food just as God had predicted.

Gehazi tells of his masters acts to king Joram.

2 Kings 8:1-6.

This event must have taken place before Gehazi became a leper as the king would not have allowed a leper into the palace,

2 kings 5:27.

Elijah had previously announced the seven year famine, he also told the woman of Shumen to go to the land of the Philistines. When she returns to claim her property we find Gehazi speaking with the king, telling him

about the events of the boy being resurrected. The king orders the return of her property, so the presence of her son was another blessing to her.

This woman never realized the importance of her son in the future, God does not interfere with our power of choice or the effect it may have on our life later, its consequences.

See 1 Chronicles 29:11;

Job 41:11;

Daniel 4:35;

James 4:13-15.

Gehazi was Elisha's trusted servant,

2 Kings 4:31;

2 Kings 5:25;

2 Kings 8:4,5.

He appears in connection with the history of the Shunammite

2 Kings 4:14,31

Then probably later, with Naaman the Syrian. However, on this second occasion he was guilty of dishonesty. This sinful act caused Elisha to declare his crime was very evil and as a result gave to him the terrible leprosy of Naaman,

2 Kings 5:20-27.

The prophecy of the death of Ben hadad, king of Syria.

2 Kings 8:7-15.

We are about to enter a series of events involving murder and killings through the land yet throughout God is in control, His presence is obvious in all the events.

When God met Elijah on Mount Horeb,

1 Kings 19:8-18

He was given three tasks to carry out, to anoint Hazael king of Syria, to anoint Jehu king of Israel, and locate and train Elisha as his successor. Elijah only appeared to have performed the anointed Elisha as his successor. We must therefore assume that the Elisha was instructed to carry out the other two acts, because we now find Elisha travelling to Damascus in Syria. It could have been a very brave act, by Elisha, to travel to Syria as he has upset many of their plans in the past. Though he had showed great mercy for Naaman and the events at Samaria.

Ben Hadad, the king of Syria, was very ill and wanted help from the Lord and this explained the arrival of Elisha. On further examination, Ben Hadad, we find a pagan, Gentile leader seeking help from the True God, why? Was it the possible effect of the healing of Naaman? A high official, Hazael, was sent with gifts to meet Elisha, they may have been possible bribes by Ben Hadad to get a good answer from God through Elisha. Hazael passed on the question from Ben Hadad. "Would the king of Syria recover from the illness?"

The actual Hebrew text used in the reply from Elisha has two opposite meanings, meaning 1 "you will get well " and meaning 2 "you will certainly not recover." It may mean that the answer meant " you will recover from the illness but die by another way," the sickness will not take your life, something else will.

Hadad returns to Ben Hadad with the answer and good news, except he does not pass on the second meaning. The response from Elisha was not a lie, it gave the correct answer to the question.

Elisha seems to be reading Hazael's mind as he stares at him, then Elisha breaks into tears. It appears that God had already revealed to Elisha the coming events which involved Hadad. Elisha reveals what the future was for Hadad, the evil that was coming. Hadad could not see how he would have this power, he refers to himself as "a dog," he was a nobody, a servant of the king. The response from Elisha to this remark caused Hadad some concern, "you are to be king of Syria." Did Elisha anoint Hadad, as instructed at this point? We are not told.

Did Elisha see into Hadad's heart a plan to take over the position of king, or did the prophets words put the idea and desire into the heart of Hadad? He seems to accept that he would be the next king but does not ask Elisha how it will happen.

The next day Hadad smothered the king with a wet and heavy cloth and then seizes the throne for himself, he was to remain on the throne for forty-one years.

Elisha implements God's instruction, that Jehu be anointed king of Israel.

2 Kings 9:1-13.

The action now moves to Ramoth Gilead. Israel and Judah had joined forces to deal with the Syrian army. One of the officers in the Israeli army is Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, this is not king Jehoshaphat of Judah.

Elisha is continuing to carry out the final commands to Elijah, he sends off one of the "sons of the prophets" to Jehu, the instruction is to give him God's message and then to privately anoint him king of Israel. The task to be given to Jehu was to wipe out the Ahab family because of their evil, the message specifically mentions Jezebel's evil ways and the judgement, as given by God through Elijah,

1 Kings 21:21-24.

The young man carried out the anointing and delivered the message, then ran. The other soldiers were full of questions, who and what did he say to Jehu, was he a messenger from the fighting? who was this mad man?

Jehu showed great humility, he had to be forced to tell the other soldiers what had happened. The soldiers immediately accepted this new position for Jehu.

Jehu immediately took the announcement in faith and began to serve the Lord.

Jehu carries out the judgement of God.

2 Kings 9:14-37;

2 Chronicles 22:1-9.

Ahaziah was the king of Judah and followed the evil of his mother Athaliah, and the family of Ahab. He worshiped Baal and had no interest in the Law of the True God or in the worship of God.

King Joram had been injured in the battle at Ramoth Gilead by the Syrians and was at Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah has gone to Jezreel to meet Joram and did not know of Jehu's new appointment by the action of God.

The distance from Ramoth Gilead to Jezreel is about forty-five miles, but Jehu was a fast and experienced charioteer, accompanied by his men they head for Jezreel. His approach is seen by the watchmen in Jezreel and the king sent horsemen to meet them. The word 'peace' is mentioned a number of times in the following events. Jehu tells the messengers to ride with the chariots. The fact that the messengers failed to return concerned Joram, but the watchmen were able to identify the approaching chariots "the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi," Joram and Ahaziah prepared their chariots and went to meet Jehu and his men. Perhaps they expected good news from the battle. When Joram reached Jehu he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" The reply from Jehu "What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her

witchcraft are so many?" instantly warned the king Joram of danger, Joram turned around and fled, "run Ahaziah." An arrow from Jehu stopped Joram dead. It appears that he died on the property of Naboth that Ahab and Jezebel had stolen,

1 Kings 21:1-24.

Judgement had been carried out, "'I will repay you in this plot,' says the Lord."

The death of Ahaziah.

2 Kings 9:27-29;

2 Chronicles 22:1-9.

The events of Ahaziah's death do not appear to agree in these two records, it has been suggested that Ahaziah was wounded as he'd fled from Jezreel, he managed to reach Beth-haggan and then headed for Megiddo where he tried to hide. But Jehu's men found him and killed him. The body was then taken to Jerusalem for burial by his servants. As a descendant of David he had the right to be buried there, even though he did not worship God.

The death of Jezebel.

2 Kings 9:30-37;

Jezebel soon heard that Jehu had killed her son Joram and become king. She puts on her makeup and waits by an upstairs window for Jehu to arrive. Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?"

(Zimri killed King Elah, 1 Kings 16:8-20.

Zimri had ruled for seven days then committed suicide.) By using this name Jezebel was telling Jehu his power was weak and he will soon be dead.

Jehu was there to serve God, he called out "Who is on my side? Who?", two or three servants responded and threw Jezebel out of the window, Jehu used his horse to make sure she was dead. This attracted wild dogs and while Jehu sat down for a meal, the dogs ate her body, just as Elijah had prophesied,

1 Kings 21:21-24.

The Word of God never fails.

Jehu was motivated by a desire to please God as he carried out the mission to destroy all Ahab's descendants but unfortunately anger and also ambition motivated him, not only killing direct descendants of Ahab but his friends as well, he killed innocent people and used innocent people to help him. God had to remind him of his pride and failures later in his reign.

2 Kings 10:11-14;

2 Chronicles 22:8.;

2 Kings 10:29-31;

Hosea 1:4.

Elisha tells of the victory of Jehoash over Syria.

2 Kings 13:14-19.

"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."

2 Kings 13:1.

There has been no mention of Elisha since,

2 Kings 9:1,

When Elisha sent one of the "sons of the prophets" to anoint Jehu as king of Israel. About forty years has passed and there is no record of Elisha, but he was at work for the Lord. By now he would be a very old man and approaching the end of his life.

King Jehoash felt he needed help from the Lord in his fight with Syria and goes to Elisha for help. (Jehoash was the successor to Jehoahaz and sadly followed in his way of his family, therefore God had to judge the nation.)

Jehoash shows great respect for Elisha, "O my father, my father." Elisha issued an instruction which involved Jehoash to show his faith. He was instructed to fire an arrow towards the Syrian army, indicating victory over the enemy, Elisha then told him to hit the ground with the rest of the arrows. Because Jehoash had no spiritual understanding of this act he did not realize that the number of times he hit the ground signified the number of victories he would have, he limited himself, by his action, to only three victories over the Syrians. This failure caused Elisha to respond with anger, "You should have struck five or six times for total success;"

Consider Ephesians 5:17;

"According to your faith let it be to you."

Matthew 9:29.

Death of Elisha.

2 Kings 13:20,21.

God sends a message to king Jehoash by this event, that He was still acting, and the previous promise would be fulfilled, though His messenger had died.

During a burial ceremony some Moabite raiders interrupted the service of burial, for safety the Jews placed the body into the tomb of Elisha and then ran for shelter. The dead body touched the bones of Elisha. , God used the situation to raise the man back to life showing that God was still a living and powerful God who keeps His promises.