
Day 161- June 10

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

Miracles and Massacres

Readings: *2 Chronicles 21:8; 2 Kings 6:8-23; 8:3-6; 5:1-27; 6:24-7:20*

Reflections:

- The judgment that befalls Jehoram has got to make the reader squirm. To have an incurable disease of the bowels just sounds like a terrible way to die.
- The story after this is fascinating, one of the rare stories of Israel where we actually see enemy love practiced. The King of Aram (Syria) wants to attack Israel but Elisha keeps tipping off the King of Israel. As one of the officials of Aram's King states, "Elisha...tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." In other words, Elisha, by God's spirit is reading the guys mail. So the King of Aram sends out his forces to surround and capture Elisha. Now Elisha is surrounded in Dothan but he is far from being in trouble. His servant is freaked out because of the army surrounding them but Elisha remains unphased. He states in quiet confidence, "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." He prays and his servant's eyes are opened to see the spiritual realm. "...he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around them." With one more prayer, the entire army of Aram is struck blind and rendered helpless. Elisha leads them into Samaria to be captured. Then he prays that their eyes are opened. Instead of killing them all as the King of Israel suggests, Elisha commands the king to throw them a party. They give them a huge feast and send them on their way. And what was the outcome? "So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory." Responding in the opposite spirit turned an enemy into an ally. Enemy love actually works. People just don't try it.
- Here are a few thoughts about being afraid of man based on this story. First, God knows everything and can protect you better than you can protect yourself. Through Elisha a nation was kept safe by simply knowing in advance everything that was set out against them. Second, those who are for you are greater, far greater, than those who are against you. You can't judge a situation with your eyes or the facts you know. You can only discern a situation by seeing things from God's perspective. Lastly, remember God's grace is way bigger than we will ever really grasp, even for those that would oppose us. Although Israel's story - the story of what doesn't work - is filled with war and judgment, we see in this story a foreshadowing of what Jesus will declare as God's ultimate and

highest will for his people: enemy love. God's grace should give us confidence not to fear what others think or do. If God is for us, and his grace is for us, who can be against us?

- The final part of the story is of the woman who had received her son back from the dead that shows that God was capable of truly caring for her. She did not have to fight for her rights but she could simply receive the provision God made for her. At one time she doubted God could provide. This shows the reader that yes, God can complete what he starts.
- The story of Naaman's healing and Gehazi's leprosy reveals a number insights about God. First, God loves even the enemy. Naaman, out of his great need, sought out God's help through Elisha. What is interesting is that the step of faith Elisha asked Naaman to take as a part of his healing was so simple and small, that Naaman's desire for the grand and miraculous almost left him missing God's miracle. Again, God appears to prefer the more subtle approach than to try to wow people with dramatic demonstrations of power. Elisha refuses to financially gain from allowing God to use him this way and therefore, rejects Naaman's offer of gifts. Gehazi, on the other hand, sees the healing as a chance to make some money. In the end he comes under judgment for trying to make a profit from his prophet. ☺ And so we see here three truths again to contemplate. First, God loves your enemies and so don't be surprised if God is nice to them. Second, don't expect God to do the dramatic. Expect him to work more subtly. Look for him in the simple and common. Last, don't look at the kingdom as a means to wealth. (2 Corinthians 2:17, Acts 8:18-24). God wants us to trust him and to see our wealth and provision in him.
- The final story in this section is as dramatic as many of the others during the time of Elijah. The Arameans lay siege to Samaria and cause such a famine that the most horrible and unthinkable things happens. A woman gives her own son to be eaten. Again, this is to cause the reader to be filled with horror. How bad can it get? And this is the Promised Land? And we are God's promised people? The horror of this situation does not bring the king to repentance but to turn against Elisha. Elisha does not respond with fear but simply declares that a miracle will take place that will mean everyone will have plenty. This is unimaginable and humanly impossible. Imagine the starvation being so bad that a woman would kill her own son for food and then telling them that the next day their will be so much food that everyone will have plenty? Talk about hard to believe. Well, the people God chooses to use to bring about this miracle are the least likely of all people. God chooses to use ten lepers. Once again God does not choose the strong, the wise, the powerful, the gifted, the competent, the religious. God picks the biggest outcasts he can find to work through. These lepers are the ones who discover that the Arameans have been chased away by the armies of God. Remember the horses and chariots of fire? Well, here they are at work again! God has chased away the army and caused them to leave all their provisions and wealth behind. The lepers could be

selfish and keep it to themselves but they are truly righteous people. They allow all of Samaria to receive the blessing and so the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled. The lesson is obvious. God will be faithful to his word, even when it seems completely impossible he expects you to believe him when he speaks! This is underscored with the Officer who doubted Elisha's prophecy. He was killed so that he would not receive any of the blessings of the miracle. This reminds us that one of the greatest sins we can commit is simply to not believe God when he has spoken. If God speaks he expects us to trust him and follow him.