
Day 165 - June 14

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

The Era of Joash in Judah

Readings: *2 Chronicles 24:3-27; 2 Kings 12:4-20; 2 Kings 10:32-35; 2 Kings 13:2-20*

Reflections:

- The accounts in this part of the story again underscore the complete inability of Israel to walk in the ways of God. Joash sets out to repair the temple. In his 23 year ruling they still had not repaired the temple even though a ton of money had been collected for this purpose. What is discovered is that sons of Athaliah had stolen the money. Jehoiada sets up a new treasure chest to collect more money. So they do repair the temple but this only lasts a short time before the Syrians attack and Israel pillages the temple to buy them off. What a complete waste!
- Key verse: “Because of their guilt, God’s anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem. Although the Lord sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though the Lord sent prophets to the people bring to them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.”
- Jehoiada’s son, Zechariah, has dying words and a final prophecy that sends a chilling message to the nation: “This is what God says, ‘Why do you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’” Joash’s story ends in tragedy as we see over and over. He is accredited with having Jehoiada’s son stoned.
- After all of this, Elisha dies and we see on his death bed the summary of the spiritual condition of Israel. He calls Jehoash, King of Israel, to prophecy about the ultimate victory of Israel over the Arameans. He commands the king to strike the ground with an arrow as a sign of victory. Instead of striking it seven times (the number of completion) he only strikes it three times. Elisha says, “You should have struck the ground five or six times, then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you defeat it only three times.”
- In the end, even Joash is assassinated and not even buried as a king in Israel. Another sad account.

- What lessons can we learn? First, the repair to the temple which was symbolic of getting their spiritual house in order was not ultimately a priority. They knew they should do it but in the end they show that in their heart of hearts they don't value God at all. It took forever, money was stolen, and in the end, even what was finally completed was simply handed over to the Arameans to buy them off. A great reminder that God doesn't care that you "talk the talk" but that you "walk the talk." Don't just say you love God, show it in your actions. Second, we see those who love their own sinful behavior never want to go all way to get rid of the supply line. Like a drug addict, they never want to completely end their friendships with their party friends. Elisha wants to prophecy the complete destruction of the Arameans but the King just can't bring himself to symbolically go the whole distance of saying, "yes, I want them all gone!" Why would he hold back? Because the Arameans were the ones totally into Baal worship. The nation was addicted and so when it came to cutting them off entirely, even if just prophetically before Elisha, the king can't do it.
- The lessons today repeat for us the importance of going the whole distance and not stopping short. To walk by faith means you keep at whatever the Lord has told you to do and not give up or quit or give yourself excuses as a way out. Faith means continuing to trust God even when you have lots of reasons for giving up.
- Our own vision is often so short-sighted and we can rationalize why we should quit. People stole the money. The Arameans are attacking, unless we give them everything from the temple, they won't leave. If we totally wipe out the Arameans, what will we do without the Baals? God wants us to look past our own immediate circumstances and to see Him and trust him. Our confidence is simply to be in his heart and his faithfulness. As the prophet Habakkuk will one day declare,

"Though the fig tree does not bud
 And there are no grapes on the vines,
 Though the olive crop fails
 And the fields produce no food,
 Though there are no sheep in the pen
 And no cattle in the stalls,
 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
 I will be joyful in God my Savior.
 The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 He enables me to go on the heights." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)