

Old Testament History

Lesson #20

2 Kings 8:25-14:20

Outline

I. ***The Late Divided Kingdom (2 Kings 8:16-17:41)***

- A. Ahaziah of Judah (8:25-29).
- B. Jehu of Israel (9:1-10:36).
- C. Queen Athaliah of Judah (11:1-21).
- D. Joash of Judah (12:1-21).
- E. Jehoahaz of Israel (13:1-9).
- F. Jehoash of Israel (13:10-25).
- G. Amaziah of Judah (14:1-22).

Notes

2 Kings 8:25-9:37; 2 Chronicles 22:1-9

- Ahaziah walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, but his mother Athaliah was his counsellor. It was by her and the family's advice that he united with his uncle Jehoram in the expedition that ended in the death of the two kings, although there is no evidence that a Judean army actually fought with the army of Israel.
- Fourteen years prior, Jehoshaphat, the grandfather of Ahaziah, joined with Ahab in a similar undertaking at Ramoth-gilead which had proved unsuccessful and wherein Ahab lost his life. Leaving Ramoth-gilead, which he had taken, in the oversight of Jehu, his chief captain, Jehoram went back to the summer palace of Jezreel to recover from his wounds, and to be nearer to the field of battle and his official court.
- Elisha sent one of the "children of the prophets" to anoint Jehu as king. Jehu's divine commission was twofold: (1) He was to annihilate all the wicked and apostate house of Ahab and (2) thereby avenge the blood of God's own who had been martyred for their faithfulness. In this, Jehu was to be God's instrument of divine vengeance against Jezebel's bloody persecutions. This would also be the loudest and last call to national repentance to come to Israel before the storm of judgment would burst over the land.
- Jehu received an enthusiastic response by his men to the prophet's pronouncement. Having most likely left a security force to defend Ramoth-gilead, and having given instructions that no one be allowed to slip out of the city to warn Jehoram in Jezreel, Jehu took a group of troops and set out for Jezreel and Jehoram. In God's providence (cf. 2 Chronicles 22:7), Ahaziah of Judah was at Jezreel visiting his ailing relative (cf. 8:29).

- Jehoram rode his chariot to meet Jehu at the plot of ground that Ahab had taken from Naboth. From Jehu's words we learn that in popular opinion Jezebel exercised almost complete influence over her son, and that the idolatrous rites practiced in the land were attributed to her.
- In fulfillment of Elijah's prophetic threat (cf. 1 Kings 21:19-24), which apparently Jehu and his chariot officers had heard, Jehu instructed his aide to throw Jehoram's fallen body into Naboth's field. Ahaziah was wounded at the ascent to Gur, he was apprehended by Jehu's men in Samaria and then taken to Megiddo, where he was put to death, his body being given to his servants who took him to Jerusalem for burial.
- Jezebel was killed by eunuchs who sided with Jehu, and her body was eaten by dogs as per Elijah's prophecy (1 Kings 21:23). She "painted her face, and tired her head" (9:30). At archaeological excavations throughout Israel, small boxes, vials, and containers -- made of ivory, stone, pottery, and glass -- have been found. Some of these were used for the preparation of cosmetics. Substances such as kohl were used for black; turquoise for green; and ochre for red.

2 Kings 10:1-36; 2 Chronicles 21:10; 24:17-26

- Jehu clearly understood his mission regarding the house of Ahab and the worship of Baal. But he accepted it as a national and "Jehovahistic" movement without the necessities of a true fear of the Lord and true repentance toward Him. He saw himself as an instrument of vengeance, not as a servant of the Lord.
- A dynasty that had spanned four reigns would have many adherents, and the demoralizing influence of Baal worship must have spread widely throughout the land. The mission and the reign of Jehu would depend upon a rapid succession of measures which would anticipate the possibility of a counterrevolution, and render a return to the former state of affairs impossible.
- The rulers in Samaria felt that resistance was futile and sent Jehu a letter of submission. With this concession in hand, Jehu sent a second letter, demanding that the heads of Jehoram's surviving heirs be brought to him in Jezreel. Again the officials complied and sent the severed heads to Jehu, who then had them placed in two piles before the gate of Jezreel.
- It was now possible for Jehu to take possession of his capital without danger of opposition, and carry out his final measures against the old regime. He killed everyone who had been connected with the house of Ahab in Jezreel. He also seized and killed 42 princes of the house of Ahaziah at the shearing house.
- Jehu then met Jehonadab the Recabite, who, having heard of Jehu's anti-Baal crusade, had apparently come to meet the new Israelite king.

Jeremiah records that Jehonadab was the leader of an ascetic group that lived an austere, nomadic life in the desert, drinking no wine and depending solely on the Lord for their sustenance (Jeremiah 35:1-19). Jehonadab was extremely interested in Jehu's desire to purge the nation of Baalism. Perhaps he hoped that in Jehu a sense of national repentance and turning to the God of Israel would now take place.

- Jehu's continued purge of Baalism in Israel next took the form of deception. Pretending that he himself was a devotee of Baal, he ordered a great assembly for sacrifice to be held in Samaria and ordered all the priests and ministers of Baal to come, on penalty of death. To identify them as Baal's, each was given a special robe. After the executions, the wooden images and stone statues of Baal were carried outside and demolished; then the temple itself was torn down and burned.
- The Lord commended him and promised him a royal succession to the fourth generation. Yet Jehu would disappoint God; for his reform was soon seen to be political and selfish rather than born of any deep devotion to God. Because of his idolatry, God allowed the Syrians to plunder and reduce the size of Israel, beginning with the loss of the land to the east of the Jordan. The decline of the northern kingdom had begun.
- At Calah, near Nineveh, Sir Austen Henry Layard found in 1846 a block of black stone in the ruins of the palace of Shalmaneser. It was seven feet high and covered with reliefs and inscriptions that depicted his exploits. It is called the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and is now in the British Museum. In the second line from the top is a figure kneeling at the feet of the king. This was Jehu, the successor of Omri, who paid tribute to Shalmaneser.

2 Kings 11:1-20; 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21

- This is now the period of judgments, when each follows the other with only brief intermission. The marriage between Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, and Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had introduced apostasy and disaster to the house of David. From her entrance into her new home in Judah, to her seizure of its throne, Athaliah brought David's house only evil.
- On the news of the death of her son Ahaziah, Athaliah took whatever measures were necessary to seize the throne for herself, including the murder of her own grandchildren and all that remained of the royal family. With all natural heirs put out of the way, she ascended the throne, inaugurating a seven-year reign.
- Jehoiada was an active and energetic high priest who laid plans to remove the queen from power. First, he secured the allegiance of the military officials and temple personnel. Second, he summoned the

Levites and heads of families throughout the Judah to Jerusalem and swore them to loyalty to the true king (2 Chronicles 23:2). Third, on a set day he had the temple personnel seal off the temple area at the changing of the guard and had trusted guards deployed in strategic fashion. He then anointed Joash as king.

- In 2 Kings the plot and its execution is placed in the hands of the military, while 2 Chronicles puts it in the hands of the priests and Levites, although 2 Chronicles does mention five military leaders who led Athaliah to her death. The two accounts supplement one another.
- At Jehoiada's command Athaliah was seized and escorted to the gate used for the palace horses and put to death by the sword. Thus Athaliah, the most infamous queen of Judah, died at the hands of her executioners, much as did her mother Jezebel, queen of Israel.
- With Athaliah out of the way, Jehoiada completed the royal coronation by a twofold act, of which the first consisted in a covenant by which the new king and the people bound themselves to renewed allegiance to God; in the second the king bound himself to the people, no doubt to rule in accordance with the law.
- In attestation to their vows, a complete cleansing of the land followed. Baal's temple was torn down, his priest Mattan slain before the images, and the altar completely pulverized (2 Chronicles 23:17). Not only was the pagan worship of Baal put away, but a reorganization of the temple worship followed that was in accordance with the law of Moses and that followed the order instituted by David.
- The day was capped with a thrilling scene. With Jehoiada in the lead, the royal bodyguard escorted the young king toward the palace, followed by the high officials representing the military, civil, and religious orders, with the joyous people bringing up the rear. Sadly, this same Joash and many of the same officials would, on another day, bring Judah down to the lowest point of the degraded Canaanite religion that they had just defeated.

2 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Chronicles 24:1-27

- The great defect of the character and reign of Joash was a fatal weakness, much like his ancestor Ahab, which was probably due to a lack of stable, personal religious convictions. Under the influence of Jehoiada, he did what was right.
- The most notable act of the reign of Joash was the restoration of the temple. The need for it arose not so much from the age of the building, which had only been completed about 130 years before, as from the damage done to it by the family of Athaliah, and the conversion of it to the worship of Baal (2 Chronicles 24:7).

- Joash's first edict regarding the collection for the temple (doubtless made early in his reign; cf. 2 Chronicles 24:5) called for the setting aside of money collected as a result of the payment of special religious taxes and voluntary offerings. The Chronicler adds that the Levites were to gather the funds personally, collecting them from the cities of Judah. The collection was so successful that there was even money left over for the provision of sacred vessels for the sanctuary service (2 Chronicles 24:14).
- The narrative quickly shifts in time, noting that Hazael had renewed his pressure against Israel and Judah, penetrating down the coast as far as Philistia and then turning inland to make a direct attack against Jerusalem. A siege of Jerusalem was averted only when Joash stripped the royal treasury and the wealth of the temple as payment to Hazael.
- The reason for this drastic turn of events can be gleaned from the supporting details in 2 Chronicles 24:14-22. Regular temple worship had continued throughout the days of Jehoiada; but after the death of the godly high priest, Joash fell into the hands of godless advisors who turned his heart to Canaanite practices. When God's patience ran out, He delivered Joash and Judah into the hands of the Syrians.
- Hazael, though equipped with an inferior army, was immediately successful under God's direction, defeating Judah suddenly and sending spoil back to Damascus (2 Chronicles 24:23-24). The campaign brought death to many in Judah, including Zechariah (cf. Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51) and the king by virtue of palace intrigue (2 Chronicles 24:25). The narrative in Kings joins the historical report at this point. With total defeat imminent, Joash bribed Hazael and saved Jerusalem.

2 Kings 13:1-25

- The reign of Jehoahaz was one of incessant warfare with Syria. The history is very briefly mentioned in Kings, which is mainly concerned with addressing the deeper spiritual reasons for the disasters of Israel in the increasing apostasy of the people.
- So bad had the Syrian encroachment been that the northern kingdom was at one point left with only 50 horses, 10 chariots, and 10,000 infantry -- a far cry from the time when Ahab alone could muster 2,000 chariots for the allied forces at Qarqar.
- In such circumstances Jehoahaz at last sought the Lord's help. While his repentance was seemingly genuine, the practice of the golden calves was allowed to remain, as was the cult connected with the Asherah pole in Samaria. Nevertheless God in His mercy did send relief to Israel (probably in the person of Adad-Nirari III, 811-783 B.C., of Assyria), with the result that the closing years of Jehoahaz's reign were free of Syrian problems.

- The reign of Jehoash was like his father's. However, he did visit Elisha on his deathbed, and the Lord used the occasion to increase his small faith. About 45 years had elapsed since the anointing of Jehu, and we do not have any record of his public activity during the 45 years that had passed since Jehu's accession.
- It is difficult to imagine more of a contrast between the young king and the dying prophet. Elisha is full of confidence and courage, and Jehoash is overwhelmed with concern rather than grief at the impending death of the prophet.
- Whereas Elisha reacted in faith and picked up his master's mantle and parted the Jordan, Jehoash demonstrated unbelief and cowardice at the imminent departure of the prophet, even with the accompanying assurance of God's help.
- Elisha instructed Jehoash to take his bow, and he placed his own hands on those of the king, thereby indicating that what he was about to do would be spiritually symbolic. Shooting the arrow out the east window showed Jehoash that would be victorious against the Syrians at Aphek. Striking the ground with the arrows showed him that he would subsequently be victorious over the Syrians. But he struck the ground three times with his arrows rather than using the five or six arrows that he had with him. Elisha was angry with the king. Had he used all his arrows, the Syrians would have been completely defeated. Now Jehoash would only win three victories. With this pronouncement the aged prophet had finished his earthly course.
- One last miracle would attend God's faithful prophet. In those last, dark days before stability was restored to the area by Adad-Nirari III, bands of Moabite marauders ravished the land at the beginning of the harvest season. The dead body coming into contact with the remains of Elisha and being resurrected was a clear sign for Jehoash and Israel. Israel could yet "live" if she would only turn to God in repentance.

2 Kings 14:1-22; 2 Chronicles 25:1-28

- Amaziah did not serve God with all his heart (2 Chronicles 25:2). Certainly he was no David; rather, he was another Joash, for he perpetuated the state policy of allowing sacrifice and offerings in the high places. Two dramatic events marked Amaziah's reign: (1) His God-given victory over Edom and (2) his self-inflicted loss to Israel. The first is dismissed in a single verse but receives expanded treatment in 2 Chronicles 25:5-15 where the basic weakness in Amaziah's character is shown.
- According to the Chronicler, Amaziah laid careful plans for the reconquest of Edom (lost in the days of Jehoram [8:20-22]). He began with a general census and conscription of able-bodied men 20 years of

age and upward (2 Chronicles 25:5). He added to the 3,000 man army by hiring another 100,000 mercenaries from Israel (2 Chronicles 25:6), which, however, he subsequently dismissed when rebuked by one of the Lord's prophets (2 Chronicles 25:7-10, 13). Thus encouraged that his cause was just and that God would give him the victory, Amaziah invaded Edom and inflicted a tremendous defeat.

- A notable defeat for Amaziah occurred here, though. Having vanquished Edom and carried off spoil and captives, he foolishly worshiped their captive gods. It is a horrible, heart-sickening scene of history. Furthermore, it is so completely foreign to the Jewish character that it shows the degradation which the contemporary prophets Hosea and Amos describe in very vivid language. For this the man of God again rebuked Amaziah. This time, however, Amaziah no longer needed God, for he considered that he had won the battle by himself. So he threatened the prophet and sent him away. Yet before he left that prophet announced Amaziah's doom for his spiritual callousness and self-will.
- This knowledge of Amaziah's character and the information that the disgruntled Israelite mercenaries had looted the northernmost Judean cities on their way back home to Israel (2 Chronicles 25:13) set the background for the second major event of Amaziah's time -- the contest with Jehoash of Israel (cf. 2 Chronicles 25:17-24).
- Having defeated Edom with ease, Amaziah overestimated his own abilities and reasoned that he would have little trouble with Israel. He moved his troops to a confrontation with Jehoash at Bethshemesh. In that battle Jehoash was victorious. Josephus records that Jehoash made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem through the 600 foot breach in the city wall, carrying his royal prisoner with him. Second Chronicles 25:20 reports that behind it all lay the hand of divine providence that arranged the details in order to teach Amaziah and Judah the folly of trusting in foreign gods.
- This war probably occurred in the 14th, and the Edomite war in the 13th year of the reign of Amaziah. The 15 years which followed the death of Jehoash were full of trouble to Amaziah. Amaziah's return only aroused old antagonisms and, doubtless, new political enemies. The tension of having two kings (Azariah was made coregent before his battle with Jehoash) was resolved in a conspiracy against Amaziah that first caused his flight and then ended with his death in Lachish, in the low country of Judah on the road from Hebron to Gaza.