
Day 159 - June 8

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

Miracles and Massacres

Readings: *2 Kings 8:16-17; 2 Chronicles 21:2-5; 2 Kings 3:6-27; 2 Chronicles 20:34; 21:1, 6-17; 1 Kings 22:45, 50; 8:18-22*

Reflections:

- The rise to power of Jehoram, son of Ahab again reveals how evil reigns in Israel. His willful massacre of his own brothers and other leading men of Israel show the same heartless and brutal leadership that Ahab and Jezebel exercised.
- The following account of Judah, Israel and Edom joining forces to fight Moab leaves the reader in the same position that Elisha found himself in. How do you respond to such a mix of good and evil? Do you reject the good because of the evil? Do you accept the evil because of good? Elisha would not relate to two out of the three kings because of the evil but was open to pray on behalf of the coalition because of the presence of Jehoshaphat. It is interesting that Elisha needed a harpist to play while he listened for God to speak to him. Did the presence of evil kings make it hard for him to hear? Did he need an environment of musical worship to quiet his own spirit so that he could pray? It would seem so but this is only speculation. If a person has a hard time praying, this may be a small Biblical tip to listen to musical worship while you are praying.
- Elisha does receive a word from God. His command to the kings makes no sense. After being without any water for over a week and camping in an area where there is no wind (or even hope of rain) or rain, Elisha declares that God commands them to dig ditches, a place to hold water. This is a fascinating step of faith. They had to create a place for water when there was no water insight. This is the way of living by faith. You have to act in such a way that looks completely ridiculous to the facts but is perfectly in line with God's declared word of what he will do. God knows exactly what he is doing when he forces this kind of action. You see, God could have just poured out the rain without requiring them to dig ditches. But the ditch digging does two things. It forces those who want a miracle to actually act in faith to demonstrate to the Lord that they truly do believe God's word. Secondly, it prepares for the miracle and allows even more of God's grace to be experienced and embraced. In this story, not only do the armies and their animals receive life sustaining water for that day and the days to come, but God also uses these same ditches with water to appear as blood to the enemies and the turning

point in defeating Moab. This story challenges us that at times God will ask us to take steps of faith that are perfectly in line with his word and will prepare for greater miracles in the future, but in the moment will test us our human sensibilities and even make us look foolish. God isn't trying to shame us but simply train our hearts to trust him alone!

- The miracle of turning water into blood, or the appearance of blood, points back to Moses and the Nile. It is a picture of water (a source of life) being turned to judgment (blood). This was true of both Egypt and Moab. It also sets the stage for Jesus' great miracle of turning water into wine as his first of all miracles. Just as the leaders of the Old Testament revealed God's judgment against sin (turning water into blood) so Jesus reveals God's amazing grace (turning water into wine). Wine was the image of blessing, celebration and joy! What a great image. Praise God for Jesus!
- The story ends tragically as a King of Moab's son is brutally sacrificed to incite the armies against Israel. Again we see that self-centered hatred will even destroy their own children or loved ones to preserve themselves. What a complete and utter contrast to the love of God as Jesus teaches us to lay down our lives for others.
- Jehoram apparently takes over kingship of both Judah and Israel for a short time. He used his leadership to turn people away from God and to actively pursue pagan worship and idolatry. In response God sends him a letter from Elijah. Now how did this happen? We don't know. Did Elisha prophetically know this would all happen and write this before he was taken? Did Elisha somehow send him a letter from heaven? Did Elisha write it on behalf of Elijah, in the spirit of Elijah? These are unanswered questions. Anyways the letter is clear. God is judging him and his kingship and things go very bad from there. Once again we see the pattern repeated again. An evil king and the people reject God and his ways and in turn come under his judgment. In the end though, they don't learn and their hearts remain hard and unchanged. It is very easy to see why future prophets will declare that what is ultimately needed is for people to have their hearts changed from the inside out. No amount of negative consequences or punishment can change the human heart. Thank God for Jesus and his grace and Spirit that changes hearts from the inside out.