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Day 162 - June 11

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## The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

### *Miracles and Massacres*

**Readings:** *2 Kings 8:23-28; 2 Chronicles 21:19-20; 22:1-4; 2 Kings 8:7-15; 9:1-37; 10:1-17; 2 Chronicles 22:8-9*

### ***Reflections:***

- All of these readings underscore again just how awful and terrible the world can be when all that reigns is judgment upon judgment. In the ongoing story of “what doesn’t work” here is a perfect example of how simply living by harsh consequences and judgment only brings destruction with no hope and does nothing to make for a better future. There is nothing redemptive, nothing healing, and nothing restorative. Hatred and violence may feel in the moment like justice is being served but in the end it is only to everyone’s loss. Again it is critical that the reader remember that the story of Israel does not reveal to us God’s heart of hearts, he is showing the world through Israel everything that doesn’t work. You see, humanities approach is to kill our enemies and wipe out those who oppose us or have done wrong in our eyes. Yet we see through Israel that a world governed this way does nothing to actually set right our greatest problem, our self-centered hearts.
- The account of Jehoram’s death doesn’t get much worse than this. His bowels came out because of disease and he died in great pain. No one honored his life and he died to no one’s regret. He is not buried as a king but as a normal person. This part of the story just doesn’t make it into Sunday school lesson but it does function as a huge “beware sign” for those who live in constant rebellion to God.
- The rise of Ahaziah shows the power of a parent, in this case the power of a parent to encourage and nurture their child in destructive and harmful approaches to life. Ahaziah was surrounded by his families influence (mother and advisors) and his life course was set towards evil. We must be wise how we respond to our parents and our family of origin. We must honor them but also discern what from their lives and influence we should receive and what we should lovingly reject as we seek to follow God’s way alone.
- Elisha’s response to Hazael is revealing. Elisha shows in the text that God has shown him what Hazael plans to do. He stares at Hazael until he is ashamed because he knows that Hazael plans to murder his master, King Ben-Hadad or Aram. The prophecy about the

Arameans under Hazael's leadership is horrifying. We see over and over that this is one of those time periods where everything is as bad as it can get. Elisha weeps and weeps revealing God's heart of grief over how terrible and awful this time of judgment will be. This finds parallel to Jesus as he stands and looks over Jerusalem and weeps for her coming destruction (Luke 19:41).

- Elisha then sends a prophet to anoint Jehu as King of Israel and the terrible judgment and blood shed continues as whole families are wiped out. This period of judgment continues to raise moral questions of how can a loving God judge people so harshly. Again we know from other Scriptures that God's judgment is just and true. Therefore we must trust in these times that God knows the hearts of these people and his holiness and complete understanding has determined that they have brought this on themselves. Remember that the religion that these people have turned too included child sacrifice, the abuse of slave girls in temple prostitution and many other terrible crimes against people. We see the conclusion that God has brought judgment against them but we need to consider the larger context in working to understand why God has done this. Again, this should also move us to say, "Thank God for Jesus, the one who has revealed to us the fullness of God's mercy and a way for us to be freed from the horror of sin and judgment."
- It doesn't get much worse than how Jehoram died. Well, actually it does get worse. The account of Jezebel's death is utterly horrifying. She dresses herself up, puts on make up, arranges her hair and positions herself in a second story window to apparently put the charm on for Jehu and hopefully win him over. He doesn't bite on her lure and commands that she be thrown down from her window. Her blood is splattered against the wall as she is trampled to death by horses. Only her head, feet and hands can be found as her body is apparently eaten by dogs. Is that gross and sickening or what? It fulfills the terrible prophecy of Elijah against her and it also declares in full-color, 3D that people who fully give themselves over to evil and hatred need to beware of the wrath of God.
- The judgments against all the evil households remain as family member after family member is killed. The wide spread judgment against the royal households result in the sad statement that no one was left to "retain the kingdom." In other words, no one had the public affirmation to be able to hold things together. The people of Israel were now in jeopardy because sin and judgment had brought so much destruction that there was no obvious person available to try to restore a sense of order. In time we will see that this will lead to the first child king, a young boy of seven having to assume the high position of ruler of the nation.