

December 20

Scriptures: Read 2 Kings 13 & 14

Key Verse: “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen.”
(1 Kings 13:14b)

Overview

In chapter thirteen, we read of the political and spiritual situation in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. While Jehu was king, the Lord raised up Hazael, king of Syria, to take land from Israel (10:32). This was a means of judgment upon them for continuing in the idolatrous calf-worship that Jeroboam established in Israel when the kingdom was first divided (1 Kings 12:26-28). Even after Jehu’s death (10:35), Syria continued to oppress Israel where his son Jehoahaz was reigning. The oppression was so great that even the ungodly Jehoahaz called out to God to deliver them (13:4). In His compassion and mercy, God heard his desperate prayer and promised to send a deliverer so Israel would not be completely wiped out (13:5). Their escape from extinction, however, was accomplished partly by his son, Joash (13:25) and mainly by his grandson Jeroboam II. God saw that they were helpless without Him and showed them mercy. “And the Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash” (14:27). Although Jeroboam was wicked, he was a strong leader and brought deliverance to Israel.

Joash (alternate spelling is Jehoash), the son of Jehoahaz, also did evil in the sight of the Lord by allowing calf-worship to continue. Yet he had a tender place in his heart for Elisha, the prophet of God, who may have been his only point of contact with God. When Elisha was close to death with a terminal illness, Joash visited him to request that he appeal to God on behalf of Israel, that they might be delivered from their enemies. He wept with the thought of losing Elisha, for he had great respect for him and recognized him as a strong defence for Israel, as is evident by the expressive words: “my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen”. It is fitting that these same words which expressed the strength and power of Elijah (2:12) were also used of Elisha. God has also put His Spirit upon Elisha to do many wonderful things for His glory. When an individual has surrendered himself to God’s will and not his own, great things can be done for the Lord.

Elisha was the only one among all the prophets and saints whom God used as an instrument to bring about a miracle after he had died: the dead man was resurrected to life when he was placed upon the bones of Elisha (13:21). This miracle must have been given to confirm the truth of Elisha’s words that Israel would have the deliverance from Syria just as he had prophesied. In fact, it would not have been long after his death that those three defeats upon the enemy, which had been symbolized by the three arrows Joash struck to the ground (13:18-19), came to fulfillment (13:25). Though Israel was unfaithful to God at that time, He remained faithful to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He did not cast them from His presence, though they deserved it; this is a clear illustration of the marvelous grace of God.

In chapter fourteen, the narrative turns to consider the condition in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. After the assassination of Joash (12:20-21), his son Amaziah reigned in his place, but he

had no part in the conspiracy against his father, for he put to death those who murdered him. Amaziah's ways were just like his father's. This pleased the Lord, but not to the same degree as He had been pleased with David (14:3). After God blessed him with a great victory over Edom, Amaziah felt confident and invincible, so he challenged Jehoash, king of Israel, and went to war but was defeated. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 10:10).

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your miracles through Elisha, even into his old age. Your promise to us all is "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." We ask for Your continued strength as our daily portion. Amen.