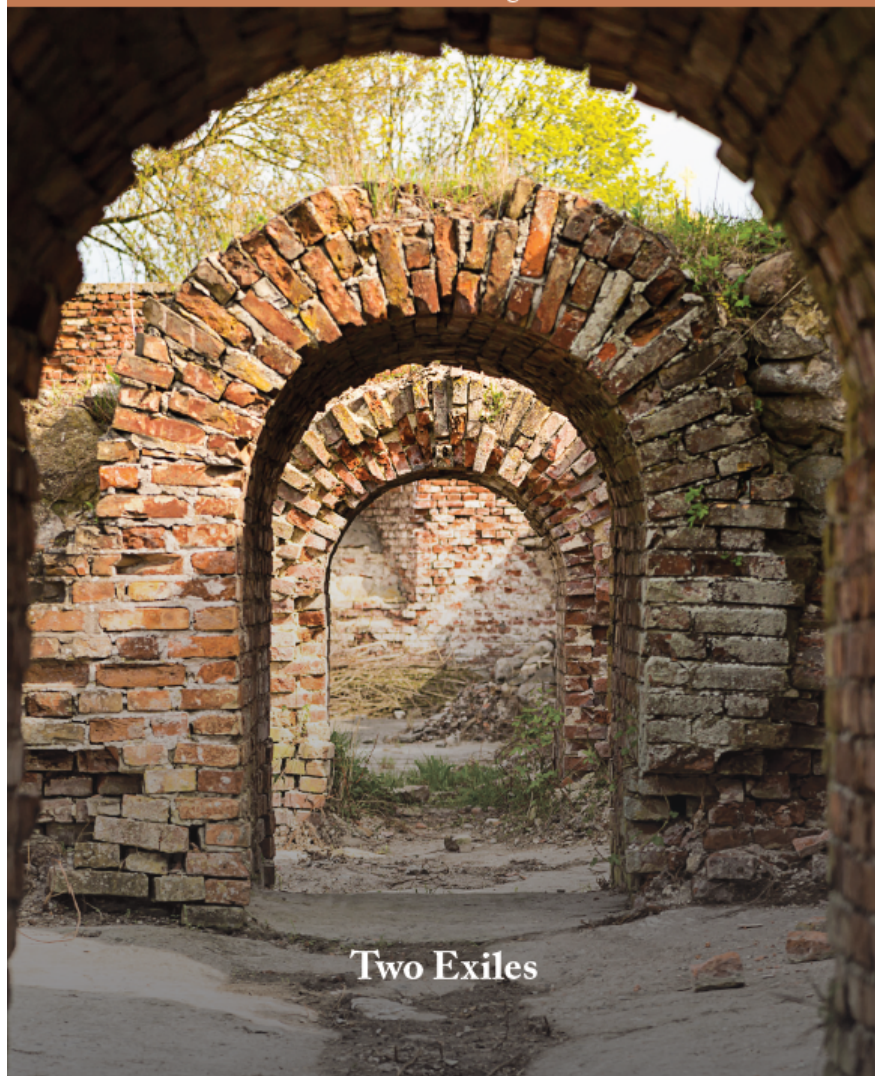


# 2 Kings Explained & Applied 12

Ger de Koning





# **The Second Book of the Kings**

Explained and Applied



# The Second Book of the Kings

**Explained and Applied**

The Two Exiles

Ger de Koning

Ger de Koning

Dutch version:

2 Koningen – Toegelicht en toegepast 12

© 2017 Uitgeverij Daniël, Zwolle, NL.

ISBN: 978-90-5798-435-8 (Paperback)

Web shop: [www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl](http://www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl)

Layout for website: Jan Noordhoek

Available as pdf, EPUB and MOBI file on

<https://www.oudesporen.nl/artikelen.php?lang=EN>

© 2021 by Ger de Koning. All rights preserved.

No part of this publication may be – other than for personal use – reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, Calif.

All rights reserved. For Permission to Quote Information visit <http://www.lockman.org>.

# Contents

<b>Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible</b>	<b>11</b>
Old Testament	11
New Testament	12
<b>Explanation of general format</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Second Book of the Kings</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction	14
<b>2 Kings 1</b>	<b>15</b>
2Kgs 1:1   Moab Rebels Against Israel	15
2Kgs 1:2   Ahaziah Wants to Consult an Idol	15
2Kgs 1:3-4   The Word of the LORD for Ahaziah	16
2Kgs 1:5-8   Ahaziah Recognizes Elijah	17
2Kgs 1:9-16   Ahaziah Wants to Capture Elijah	18
2Kgs 1:17-18   Death of Ahaziah	20
<b>2 Kings 2</b>	<b>21</b>
Introduction	21
2Kgs 2:1   Taken Up to Heaven and Leaving Gilgal	23
2Kgs 2:2-3   The Lesson of Bethel	25
2Kgs 2:4-5   The Lesson of Jericho	27
2Kgs 2:6-8   The Lesson of the Jordan	28
2Kgs 2:9-10   Elisha's Question	29
2Kgs 2:11   Elijah Goes Up to Heaven	30
2Kgs 2:12   Reaction of Elisha	31
2Kgs 2:13-14   Elijah's Mantle	32
2Kgs 2:15-18   The Sons of the Prophets	33
2Kgs 2:19-22   The Water of Jericho	35
2Kgs 2:23-25   Judgment on Mocking Boys	37
<b>2 Kings 3</b>	<b>40</b>
2Kgs 3:1-3   Jehoram King Over Israel	40
2Kgs 3:4-5   Moab Rebels	40

2Kgs 3:6-8   Jehoshaphat Is Willing to Help Jehoram	41
2Kgs 3:9-12   Elisha Is Consulted	42
2Kgs 3:13-19   Elisha's Counsel	43
2Kgs 3:20-27   Moab Slaughtered	45
<b>2 Kings 4</b>	<b>47</b>
Introduction	47
2Kgs 4:1   A Widow Comes to Elisha	47
2Kgs 4:2-4   Counsel of Elisha	48
2Kgs 4:5-7   The Miracle of the Oil	49
2Kgs 4:8-11   A Room for Elisha	51
2Kgs 4:12-17   Elisha Promises the Woman a Son	52
2Kgs 4:18-20   The Death of the Son	53
2Kgs 4:21-28   The Woman Brings Her Need to Elisha	54
2Kgs 4:29-31   Elisha Sends Gehazi	56
2Kgs 4:32-37   Elisha Raises the Boy	57
2Kgs 4:38-41   Death Removed From the Pot	57
2Kgs 4:42-44   Multiplication of the Loaves	59
<b>2 Kings 5</b>	<b>61</b>
Introduction	61
2Kgs 5:1   The Great Naaman	61
2Kgs 5:2-3   A Little Girl	62
2Kgs 5:4-7   Help Question to the King of Israel	63
2Kgs 5:8-10   Elisha Lets Naaman Come to Him	65
2Kgs 5:11-12   Naaman's Response	65
2Kgs 5:13-14   Naaman Becomes Clean	67
2Kgs 5:15-16   Naaman Wants to Reward Elisha	67
2Kgs 5:17-19   Naaman Returns Home	68
2Kgs 5:20-24   The Greed of Gehazi	69
2Kgs 5:25-27   Gehazi Is Discovered and Becomes Leprous	71
<b>2 Kings 6</b>	<b>73</b>
Introduction	73
2Kgs 6:1-3   A New Place to Live	73
2Kgs 6:4-7   The Accident and the Miracle	74
2Kgs 6:8-10   Elisha Warns the King of Israel	76
2Kgs 6:11-14   Command to Capture Elisha	77



2Kgs 6:15-20   Open and Closed Eyes	78
2Kgs 6:21-23   Grace for Enemies	79
2Kgs 6:24-30   Famine in Samaria	80
2Kgs 6:31-33   Elisha Gets the Blame	81
<b>2 Kings 7</b>	<b>83</b>
2Kgs 7:1-2   Elisha Foretells Food and Judgment	83
2Kgs 7:3-4   Four Leprous Men Confer	83
2Kgs 7:5-8   Abundance of Food and Wealth	84
2Kgs 7:9-11   Good News Must Be Told	85
2Kgs 7:12-15   Reaction to the Good News	86
2Kgs 7:16-20   The Word of the LORD Fulfilled	87
<b>2 Kings 8</b>	<b>90</b>
2Kgs 8:1-6   The Shunammite Gets Back Her Field	90
2Kgs 8:7-15   Hazael King of Aram	92
2Kgs 8:16-24   Jehoram King of Judah	94
2Kgs 8:25-29   Ahaziah King of Judah	95
<b>2 Kings 9</b>	<b>97</b>
Introduction	97
2Kgs 9:1-4   Command to Anoint Jehu King Over Israel	98
2Kgs 9:5-10   Anointing of and Command for Jehu	99
2Kgs 9:11-13   Jehu Proclaimed King	100
2Kgs 9:14-26   Jehu Kills Jehoram	101
2Kgs 9:27-29   Jehu Kills Ahaziah	104
2Kgs 9:30-37   Jehu Kills Jezebel	104
<b>2 Kings 10</b>	<b>107</b>
Introduction	107
2Kgs 10:1-11   Ahab's Offspring Killed	107
2Kgs 10:12-14   The Brothers of Ahaziah Killed	110
2Kgs 10:15-16   Jehonadab	111
2Kgs 10:17   Jehu Completes His Commission	113
2Kgs 10:18-28   The Worshipers of Baal Exterminated	113
2Kgs 10:29-33   Reward and Punishment	115
2Kgs 10:34-36   The Death of Jehu	116

<b>2 Kings 11</b>	<b>117</b>
2Kgs 11:1-3   Jehosheba Hides Joash	117
2Kgs 11:4-8   Jehoiada's Plan	118
2Kgs 11:9-12   Joash Crowned and Anointed	119
2Kgs 11:13-16   Athaliah Put to Death	121
2Kgs 11:17-18   The Covenant	122
2Kgs 11:19-21   Joash on the Throne	122
<b>2 Kings 12</b>	<b>124</b>
2Kgs 12:1-3   Reign of Jehoash	124
2Kgs 12:4-8   Jehoash Commands to Restore the Temple	125
2Kgs 12:9-16   Temple Restoration Collection	126
2Kgs 12:17-18   Hazael Threatens Jerusalem	127
2Kgs 12:19-21   Death of Joash	128
<b>2 Kings 13</b>	<b>129</b>
2Kgs 13:1-9   Jehoahaz King Over Israel	129
2Kgs 13:10-13   Jehoash King Over Israel	131
2Kgs 13:14-19   Jehoash Visits the Sick Elisha	131
2Kgs 13:20-21   Death of Elisha	133
2Kgs 13:22-25   God Is Gracious to His People	135
<b>2 Kings 14</b>	<b>136</b>
2Kgs 14:1-4   Amaziah Becomes King of Judah	136
2Kgs 14:5-7   First Government Actions of Amaziah	137
2Kgs 14:8-14   Amaziah Defeated by Jehoash	138
2Kgs 14:15-20   Death of Jehoash and Amaziah	139
2Kgs 14:21-22   Azariah Made King	140
2Kgs 14:23-27   Jeroboam II King Over Israel	140
2Kgs 14:28-29   Death of Jeroboam II	142
<b>2 Kings 15</b>	<b>143</b>
Introduction	143
2Kgs 15:1-7   Azariah King of Judah	143
2Kgs 15:8-12   Zechariah King Over Israel	144
2Kgs 15:13-16   Shallum King Over Israel	145
2Kgs 15:17-22   Menahem King Over Israel	146
2Kgs 15:23-26   Pekahiah King Over Israel	147

2Kgs 15:27-31   Pekah King Over Israel	148
2Kgs 15:32-38   Jotham King of Judah	148
<b>2 Kings 16</b>	<b>151</b>
2Kgs 16:1-4   Ahaz Becomes King of Judah	151
2Kgs 16:5-9   Ahaz Makes an Alliance with Assyria	152
2Kgs 16:10-18   Replacing the Altar of the LORD	154
2Kgs 16:19-20   Death of Ahaz	156
<b>2 Kings 17</b>	<b>158</b>
Introduction	158
2Kgs 17:1-4   Hoshea King Over Israel	158
2Kgs 17:5-6   Israel Carried Away Into Exile	159
2Kgs 17:7-23   Reason for the Deportation	160
2Kgs 17:24-28   The New Inhabitants of Samaria	163
2Kgs 17:29-33   The Religion of the Samaritans	165
2Kgs 17:34-41   Disobeying the Word	165
<b>2 Kings 18</b>	<b>169</b>
Introduction	169
2Kgs 18:1-8   Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah	169
2Kgs 18:9-12   Israel Carried Away Into Exile	171
2Kgs 18:13-16   Hezekiah Pays Sennacherib Tribute	172
2Kgs 18:17-37   Bluster Against the LORD	173
<b>2 Kings 19</b>	<b>177</b>
2Kgs 19:1-5   Hezekiah Sends Servants to Isaiah	177
2Kgs 19:6-7   Encouragement by Isaiah	178
2Kgs 19:8-13   Assyria Wants to Impress Again	179
2Kgs 19:14-19   Hezekiah's Prayer	179
2Kgs 19:20-34   Prophecy of Isaiah	181
2Kgs 19:35-37   Deliverance of Jerusalem	185
<b>2 Kings 20</b>	<b>186</b>
2Kgs 20:1-11   Illness and Recovery of Hezekiah	186
2Kgs 20:12-19   The Delegation From Babylon	189
2Kgs 20:20-21   The Death of Hezekiah	190

<b>2 Kings 21</b>	<b>192</b>
2Kgs 21:1-9   Manasseh King of Judah	192
2Kgs 21:10-16   The LORD Announces Judgment	194
2Kgs 21:17-18   Death of Manasseh	196
2Kgs 21:19-26   Amon King of Judah	196
<b>2 Kings 22</b>	<b>198</b>
2Kgs 22:1-2   Josiah King of Judah	198
2Kgs 22:3-7   Money for the Restoration of the Temple	198
2Kgs 22:8-11   The Book of the Law Found	199
2Kgs 22:12-20   The Word of the LORD	201
<b>2 Kings 23</b>	<b>204</b>
2Kgs 23:1-3   The Covenant	204
2Kgs 23:4-14   The Cleansing	205
2Kgs 23:15-20   The Altar at Bethel	210
2Kgs 23:21-23   Josiah Celebrates the Passover	211
2Kgs 23:24-25   Last Acts and Testimony of Josiah	212
2Kgs 23:26-27   The Wrath of the LORD Must Come	213
2Kgs 23:28-30   Death of Josiah	214
2Kgs 23:31-34   Jehoahaz King of Judah	215
2Kgs 23:35-37   Jehoiakim King of Judah	216
<b>2 Kings 24</b>	<b>218</b>
2Kgs 24:1-7   Jehoiakim King of Judah (continued)	218
2Kgs 24:8-12   Jehoiachin King of Judah	219
2Kgs 24:13-16   All Jerusalem Led Away Into Exile	220
2Kgs 24:17-20   Zedekiah King of Judah	221
<b>2 Kings 25</b>	<b>223</b>
2Kgs 25:1-7   Flee and Capture of Zedekiah	223
2Kgs 25:8-21   Judah Carried Away Into Exile	224
2Kgs 25:22-26   Appointment and Death of Gedaliah	227
2Kgs 25:27-30   Grace for Jehoiachin	228
<b>Other Publications</b>	<b>230</b>

## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

---

### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

### **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## The Second Book of the Kings

### **Introduction**

As noted in the introduction to the 1<sup>st</sup> book of Kings, both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings in the Hebrew Old Testament are one book. That both books form one book is clear from the transition of 1 Kings to 2 Kings. 2 Kings begins with the mention of the death of Ahab. This is a continuation of the last chapter of 1 Kings (1Kgs 22:29-40). However, 1 Kings does not close with this. Following the mention of the death of Ahab, there is a short report of the kingship of Jehoshaphat over Judah, probably because of his relationship with Ahab and Ahab's son. After that some more announcements are made about Ahaziah, who succeeds his father Ahab as king over Israel. That ends the first book of Kings.

A plausible reason for a separation in the histories in one great book of Kings may be that it would otherwise be too large a book. It is difficult to give a plausible reason for making that separation as it has been done. It has been suggested, a possible reason for why the separation was done that way, is to be similar to the one great book of Samuel. 2 Samuel begins with the mention of the death of Saul and 2 Kings begins with the mention of the death of Ahab.

The description of the course of history in 2 Kings is done in a way that is somewhat comparable to the way in which the writer presents the histories in 1 Kings to us. 1 Kings begins with the blessing and wisdom of Solomon and ends with the follies of the kings of the northern kingdom. The history of the ten tribes in the northern realm begins with Jeroboam, the 'trendsetter' for all the succeeding kings of that realm, and ends with Ahab, the king who completely apostatized from God.

The beginning of 2 Kings is essentially a record of the grace of God as presented through Elisha for an apostate nation. Despite this grace, the people slide completely away from God. 2 Kings ends with the exile of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria and the exile of the two tribes by the king of Babylon.



## 2 Kings 1

### **2Kgs 1:1 | Moab Rebels Against Israel**

| *1 Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.*

After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. Moab was under tribute to Israel, but used the change of rule to withdraw from the power of Ahab's successor. As a result, a large part of the income of the king of Israel was lost (2Kgs 3:4). The purpose of mentioning this fact is probably to indicate that God's discipline is also felt politically and economically. If a king of God's people turns away from God, it is also at the expense of his power over the enemies of God's people.

### **2Kgs 1:2 | Ahaziah Wants to Consult an Idol**

| *2 And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which [was] in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness."*

Ahaziah's behavior (1Kgs 22:52-53) brought God's discipline upon him. He fell out of the window and had to keep to his bed. The fact that Ahaziah fell down from his upper chamber, is in contrast to the direction of Elijah's pathway, which was going higher and higher. In this chapter Elijah sat on a mountain and in the next chapter he was taken up into heaven.

Often a sickbed is the place where a person is given the opportunity to reflect on his life; an opportunity which God likes to use to point people to Himself. With Ahaziah things were different; while on his sickbed, he made it clear on whom he placed his hope. He turned to "the god of Ekron". Ekron was a city of the Philistines.

Ahaziah sent messengers abroad to the Philistines, to consult one of their gods, Baal-zebub, which means 'lord of the flies'. He resorted to demons to ask them how his illness would go. Ahaziah did not even ask whether the idol wanted to heal him. He only wanted to know how he was going to end up. He asked for a prediction of the future. This is in direct contradiction

of what God has said in His Word; this behavior was an abomination to Him (Deu 18:10-12).

A lot of people today are following in Ahaziah's footsteps, to satisfy their curiosity about the future. They do not resort to God's Word, but seek salvation for example with soothsayers, horoscopes and other occult means. All these occult occupations are extremely dangerous. People who do this surrender to devilish powers.

Ahaziah's action was an enormous insult to the LORD. Ahaziah completely ignored God. One of the worst things a person can do to another is to ignore him completely. This insult was suffered by God from the leader of His people.

## **2Kgs 1:3-4 | The Word of the LORD for Ahaziah**

*3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel [that] you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'*

*4 Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" Then Elijah departed.*

In both His indignation and His faithfulness, the Lord sent Elijah to the messengers, with a word for Ahaziah. This way Ahaziah received an answer sooner than he expected. Elijah had to tell Ahaziah how the LORD saw his future. Messengers must always convey the message. God's message was the penetrating question: "Is it because there is no God in Israel ...?" That was the question that should have brought Ahaziah to repentance.

The Lord always wants to point out to us that He is there, through all kinds of events that happen to us. He wants us to know that we can go to Him with everything. This also means that we should not set our expectations on people or gods to know how things will go.

Isaiah also once spoke to the people in a way similar to what we read here of Elijah (Isa 8:19-22). In the days of Isaiah, the people resorted to spirit mediums, instead of accepting the signs and messages that God gives. Whoever does not believe in the Word of God, seeks advice and help from other sources.

The LORD reproached the people for this by asking two rhetorical questions: “Should not a people consult their God? [Should they consult] the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isa 8:19). These were questions that corresponded to what Ahaziah was asked. Instead of consulting the living God, dead idols were consulted, but behind those dead idols were evil spirits (1Cor 10:19-20).

## 2Kgs 1:5-8 | Ahaziah Recognizes Elijah

*5 When the messengers returned to him he said to them, “Why have you returned?” 6 They said to him, “A man came up to meet us and said to us, ‘Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel [that] you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.’”’” 7 He said to them, “What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?” 8 They answered him, “[He was] a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”*

The messengers reported on what Elijah had told them. It seems that they were not even aware that they had met Elijah. They talked about “a man”. Ahaziah then asked what he looked like. They were able to describe that man. From the description, Ahaziah drew the correct conclusion that it was Elijah. He did not forget Elijah.

Elijah’s clothing gave him a unique appearance, and his clothes characterized him. He had a service of simplicity and therefore of strength. The clothes he wore carried that message, as it were. He did not walk in soft clothes, like distinguished people (Mt 11:8). John the baptist was also characterized by the simplicity of his clothing and also by the simplicity of his food (Mt 3:4).

Can people also see from our attitude and behavior, that we are not part of a world lying “in [the power of] the evil one” (1Jn 5:19)? Where everything is determined by man’s thinking, can they see by our Christian behavior, that we do not allow ourselves to be carried away to fit in the world’s mold? Can God use us to give a clear testimony of Him, that He is there?

## 2Kgs 1:9-16 | Ahaziah Wants to Capture Elijah

9 Then [the king] sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" 10 Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. 11 So he again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he said to him, "O man of God, thus says the king, 'Come down quickly.'" 12 Elijah replied to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. 13 So he again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, "O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14 Behold fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight." 15 The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king. 16 Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word?—therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.'"

Ahaziah no longer had to go to the god of Ekron. He now knew where he stood regarding his illness. His sickbed was to be his deathbed. Instead of accepting this and bowing before God, Ahaziah wanted to kill Elijah. He believed in idolatrous superstition that he could break the curse – for that is how he saw Elijah’s announcement – if he eliminated Elijah. He only looked at the instrument and not at God. He sent a captain of fifty with his fifty to bring Elijah to him.

The captain found Elijah, sitting alone on top of the hill. Elijah was there in peace and quiet. He was on a hilltop, the right place for a man of God. It speaks symbolically of his separation from a godless environment and of being close to God. The captain spoke to him as “man of God”. He acknowledged who Elijah was by doing so. However, he did not bow down to him, but ordered him to go with him by command of the king.

Like the third captain did, he could have bowed down and approached Elijah with respect, as was Elijah's due as a man of God. However, this was not the case with him. The captain was a guilty man and so were his men. They could all have listened to the message of the man of God and resisted Ahaziah in his wicked mission.

Elijah's response to the command of the captain was that he called fire to come down from heaven. The two times that Elijah commanded fire come down from heaven were the last acts of his service among the people. It was characteristic of his entire service, which was a service of judgment. In a way, his service on Mt Carmel did not bring the desired result, because the national revival that seemed to come on Mt Carmel did not lead to renewed faith in God. There was also fire from heaven at that time. But that fire came down on an innocent sacrifice. Now fire came on the people of God, but a people, who in their leader, had completely surrendered themselves to Baal.

Two of the disciples of the Lord Jesus also once wanted fire to come down from heaven. They asked the Lord for permission to do so (Lk 9:54). However, it was not the right thing to ask. The Lord Jesus forbade them, for His service was not a service of judgment, but of grace (Lk 9:55-56a). During His life on earth, it was not yet the day of revenge, it was not yet the time for the exercise of judgment. That time will come. In the future, men will appear who make fire come out of their mouths to consume their enemies (Rev 11:5).

Apparently, Ahaziah didn't mind that fifty-one people of his army had been killed by God's fire. He remained unrepentant. Once again he sent a captain with his fifty. This man acted in the spirit of his predecessor and his king. He also called Elijah "man of God", but he also lacked the corresponding reverence due to the man of God. He ordered Elijah to come with him even more strongly than his predecessor. In the words "come down quickly", it is said that he saw Elijah as a troublesome, opposing child. That 'child' had already said 'no' once, but he shouldn't have dared to do it again with him.

The man had not considered the warning of the judgment of his predecessor. The same judgment struck him. As the captain had ordered more

strongly, the description of the judgment was also stronger. Now there was not only talk of “fire came down from heaven” (verse 10), but of “the fire of God came down from heaven” (verse 12).

Ahaziah remained unrepentant even after the death of the second captain with his fifty. He sent a third captain with his fifty. This man showed a different mind. We see him bowing down before Elijah on his knees, out of due respect for the man of God. He acknowledged the justice of judgment over his two predecessors. He realized that only grace could save him and his fifties and appealed to that. Elijah then received a word from the LORD to go with this captain and not order fire to come down on him and his fifty.

When Elijah came to Ahaziah, he had nothing else to say to him on behalf of the LORD, but what Ahaziah already knew from what Elijah had said to the messengers. God does not change His thoughts about a man, if that man does not change his thoughts about Him.

### **2Kgs 1:17-18 | Death of Ahaziah**

*17 So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?*

There was no sign of repentance from Ahaziah after all that had happened. He died in his sins. Ahaziah died “according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken”. It testified to the truth that God does not change His word. It also bore witness to the faithfulness of Elijah, who spoke this word and no other word. This is also an important lesson for us: we must speak only God’s Word.

Because Ahaziah had no son, his brother Jehoram became king in his place.

## 2 Kings 2

### **Introduction**

Before Elijah was taken up to heaven, he and Elisha made a trip to some of the most famous places in Israel. He traveled from Gilgal to Bethel, then to Jericho, and finally to the Jordan. Elisha later would visit all these places (2Kgs 2:18; 4:38; 6:2).

These places are known from the ancient history of the people of God:

1. Gilgal is the place of circumcision, the starting point for the conquest of the promised land (Jos 4:19; 5:9; 10:43).
2. We already know Bethel from the book of Genesis. It is the place where God revealed Himself to the patriarch Jacob and where He gave him His unconditional promises of blessing; Bethel is the place where God wanted to live – Bethel means “house of God” (Gen 28:11-19; 35:1-4,14-15).
3. In Jericho, the LORD revealed Himself to Joshua as the Prince of the LORD’s army, the Commander of His army (Jos 5:13-15). Jericho is the great stronghold that prevented the Israelites from entering the Promised Land, but fell for the power of Israel’s God (Jos 6:20-21).
4. The Jordan is the river that prevented the Israelites from entering the land, however its waters were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, so that all Israel could cross over on dry land (Jos 3:1,14-17).

Unfortunately in the days of Elijah and Elisha these places no longer only bore witness to the great deeds of God. They had become much more the monuments of the sinfulness of the people, places of degeneration and idolatry. Originating from Egypt, calf worship was introduced by Jeroboam in Bethel and in Dan (1Kgs 12:28-29). The prophets Hosea and Amos condemned this idolatry cult in Bethel, together with that in Gilgal (Hos 4:15; 9:15; 12:12; Amos 4:4; 5:5).

Jericho was not well known either. It was the city of a curse, which according to God’s command should not have been rebuilt. In the days of Ahab this had still happened anyway, by a resident of Bethel. This man had to

pay for his transgression of the word of the LORD with the lives of two of his sons (Jos 6:26; 1Kgs 16:34). It is remarkable that precisely this fact of the rebuilding of Jericho, formed the link between Ahab's iniquities – it concludes with a summary of them (1Kgs 16:28-34) – and of Elijah's sudden appearance as a prophet of judgment (1Kgs 17:1). It is as if the rebuilding of Jericho had reached the height of iniquity, and the judgment of the people and their wicked ruler had become unavoidable.

As he walked through these places, Elijah said goodbye to his earthly career. He will have thought of all that God had done for Israel, but also of Israel's decay and apostasy from their privileged position. God took him into His glory outside the promised land, after he had travelled through the Jordan with Elisha. It seems that God could not give him this homage in the land that had departed so much from Him.

His ascension could not take place in Gilgal, or in Bethel, or in Jericho, or on the nation's side of the Jordan. Elijah had to move on and on, until God took him away from the earth on the wilderness side of the Jordan. We could almost say that it was a variant of what happened to Enoch. Of Enoch, we read that he "walked with God, and he was no longer, for God took him away" (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5). Elijah pleased God, as Enoch did, and God honored him by taking him up to heaven, as He did with Enoch.

However, this last journey of the prophet was also of great significance for Elisha, who accompanied him faithfully and did not want to leave his side. For Elisha, this long trip was on the one hand a good opportunity to prepare for the departure of his master, and on the other hand, a good introduction to his own career. Here we see him walking next to his honored master, whose work he must continue. He was not only Elijah's companion, but also his successor. If his master was in heaven, he had to continue his task below.

This is an important lesson for us as Christians, who are connected with a Lord in heaven. We serve a glorified Lord and may "represent" Him here on earth. We do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us from heaven. As the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha, Christ has given us His Spirit, that we may be readable letters of Him (2Cor 3:2-3).



But we also need the necessary preparation to serve Him in a dignified manner. We will have to walk by His side and follow Him where He leads us. Although Elisha was tested here three times, he remained inseparable from Elijah's side (2Kgs 2:2,4,6). Together they moved on and even went on dry land through the Jordan, the dead river. "So they both went on" (verse 6; cf. Gen 22:6,8; Rth 1:19).

When we walk with the Lord, He leads us step by step, from one "stopping-place" to another. Then we will, like Elijah and Elisha, consider the situation of God's people. We, in turn, will be confronted with the deep decay, the corruption that has entered into the midst of what is now the people of God on earth, Christianity i.e. the professing church.

### 2Kgs 2:1 | Taken Up to Heaven and Leaving Gilgal

*1 And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.*

The emphasis is on Elijah's ascension. Elijah is thus also a picture of the Lord Jesus Himself, and of the believers of the church who will also go to heaven. In Elijah we see displayed the Lord Jesus passing through death and resurrection and taking His place in heaven. In Elisha we see a picture of the Lord Jesus who, through the Spirit of God, maintains on earth today a testimony before God. Elijah was replaced by Elisha. Elijah is also a picture of John the baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, and Elisha is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who came with blessing after John, as Elisha came with blessing after Elijah.

The testimony on earth is given in the Spirit of Him Who has gone to heaven. This testimony is often forgotten, but the faithful are allowed to see and show it again in days of decay. Elijah had left the apostate people behind him by his passage through the Jordan, but Elisha returned to do a service that started from heaven, as it were. In order to be able to perform this service properly, Elisha received an education based on the four places he traveled through with Elijah.

The days of Elijah's ascension was the starting point for this education. It shows what God had done and how the people have subsequently reacted

to His will. In every service it is important to know how God thinks about the things we meet and also to see how man has dealt with them.

The “whirlwind” and the “fire”— a chariot of fire and horses of fire – in which the LORD took Elijah up to heaven (verses 1,11), are phenomena that are more common in the Old Testament. We see them by direct revelation or by personal intervention of the LORD God (Exo 3:2; 24:17; 1Kgs 19:11-12; Job 38:1; 40:6; Psa 18:8; 50:3; 104:3-4; Isa 30:27; 66:15; Eze 1:4; Zec 9:14).

However, these were not just impressive natural phenomena, which, incidentally, fitted in well with Elijah’s character as a prophet of judgment. ‘Whirlwind’ and ‘fire’ also represent angelic powers (Heb 1:7). Therefore we can imagine the catching up of Elijah in the following way: the LORD Himself came as the Ruler of His heavenly armies, surrounded by His mighty angels (cf. 2Kgs 6:17), to take up His faithful warrior to heaven.

What a tribute to Elijah! God took him away, as He once did with Enoch and as He will soon do with the believers who remain alive until the coming of the Lord. God took him away so that he would not see death, but would enter heaven in the twinkling of an eye (cf. Gen 5:24; 1Cor 15:51-52; 1Thes 4:15-18; Heb 11:5).

In Elijah, we see the Lord Jesus returning to heaven, and in Elisha, we see the Lord Jesus coming to earth in the Spirit to give testimony. The testimony is given in the Spirit of Him Who ascended to heaven. Both aspects express the essence of true Christian belief, which is

1. A glorified Man in heaven and
2. God the Holy Spirit on earth.

True service is performed according to the measure we have received an impression of the glorified Man at the right hand of God. The impression we have of this will characterize our testimony.

Elisha had accompanied Elijah all the way. He did not start his service until after the ascension of Elijah. It is in a picture the way of the remnant that is traveling with the Lord Jesus and is testifying in the power of the Holy Spirit. The remnant, as represented by the disciples who are on earth with the Lord Jesus, form the core of the church.

It does not say that Elisha went with Elijah, but that Elijah went with Elisha. It is in fact Elisha's way, but Elijah went with him to give him Divine teaching. It is the teaching that was needed for servants of God.

At the beginning of the chapter we are immediately informed of what was going to happen to Elijah: he would be taken up to heaven. Thus we hear early in the Gospel to Luke that the Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem because "the days were approaching for His ascension" (Lk 9:51). At the cross, that is His departure about which Moses and Elijah spoke with Him on the mountain of glorification (Lk 9:30-31), the Holy Spirit directed the eye to His ascension into heaven.

Gilgal was the first place of education. In Gilgal, the people had been circumcised (Jos 5:7-9). Gilgal was also the place from which the people departed for the conquest of Canaan. This has a spiritual meaning for us. We participate in the circumcision of Christ, because we are united with Him in the judgment that has fallen upon Him in our place on the cross (Col 2:11). That is our 'Gilgal', and from there we may take possession of our heavenly inheritance in Christ. Gilgal means 'rolled away'. Spiritually, it is the application of the death of Christ to our flesh. In the death of the Lord Jesus, God 'rolled away' from us the reproach of the world.

We need to know the unchanging wickedness of our fleshly nature. That is where every true service begins for the servant. Without the lesson of Gilgal, that is to say, the deep awareness of the unchanging wickedness of our flesh and God's judgment upon it, we cannot serve. That Gilgal has become a place of idolatry and corruption has something to tell us. If the lesson of Gilgal is forgotten, Gilgal becomes the place of promotion of the flesh. What God calls evil is then praised.

## 2Kgs 2:2-3 | The Lesson of Bethel

*2 Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 Then the sons of the prophets who [were at] Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."*

When Elijah wanted to leave Gilgal to go to Bethel, he told Elisha to stay where he was, because the LORD was sending him to Bethel. He seemed to say that the LORD's commission was for him personally and that this did not mean that Elisha necessarily had to go with him. With this, he allowed Elisha to make a choice of his own. Elijah did this at every subsequent location.

With this remark Elijah tested, as it were, the motives of his companion to go with him, whether he does so for Elijah, or whether he also sees a personal assignment from the LORD in it. Elisha passed the test with flying colors every time. He wanted to learn the lessons that are connected to each place, so that he could better serve the people of God, as a man of God. Every time, he accompanied Elijah without expressing a single reservation. Elisha went with Elijah as Ruth used to go with Naomi (Rth 1:19).

Bethel speaks of the unchanging faithfulness of God, "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). God was faithful to Jacob, the ancestor of Israel. He wanted to dwell with His people and have His 'Bethel', that means 'house of God', with them. Likewise, God is faithful to His heavenly people, the church of the living God. He wants, and will also, have His 'Bethel' with us.

The church is built to be an eternal dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22; Rev 21:2-3). God will also reach His glorious final goal with us. This can never be undone by our unfaithfulness and our failure. It is good and necessary that we should always realize this, although we will also have to bow our heads, ashamed of so many things that have crept in and dishonored God, such as heresy, materialism, idolatry and sinful practices.

But what was left of what God meant by Bethel? Elisha observed that in Bethel a false religion had been established around a golden calf. The religion of the flesh had supplanted and replaced true service to God. People had made their own houses of worship, according to their own ideas and shapes. A servant must see that too.

The right understanding of what the house of God is, is also of importance today, in order to be able to do a service. Abraham learned the lesson. He set up his tent and altar by Bethel (Gen 12:8). Jacob knew that place too; he met God there (Gen 35:9-15). There God teaches about His faithfulness to

His promises. In the application for us, it means that servants are formed in the church. First learn what Gilgal means: the judgment of the flesh, and then learn what Bethel means: the house of God, to know God, as the God of the house of God.

At Bethel, there were also sons of the prophets, or student prophets (cf. 1Sam 10:5b; 19:20). At the schools of prophets in Bethel, and also in Jericho (verse 5), the 'students' had been taught about the taking up of Elijah. The students thought they should inform Elisha about this, without having a connection with Elijah themselves. They spoke to Elisha about Elijah not as 'our' lord, but as 'your' lord. They also noticed that Elisha taught things they didn't learn at their school. They didn't go along the way that Elisha went with Elijah, but stood at a distance. The student prophets didn't tell Elisha anything new. Despite the fact that he couldn't boast of training at an approved institute, he was aware of what was about to happen to Elijah. Elisha had no education, but he had his calling.

The expression 'take away ... from over you' indicates that Elijah was above Elisha and taught him. This is also literally the case when Elisha was at his feet and Elijah was therefore standing over his head. Elisha would soon have to do his job independently without the instructions of his master.

### 2Kgs 2:4-5 | The Lesson of Jericho

*4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The sons of the prophets who [were] at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still."*

Also in Bethel, Elisha is tested to stay there. But he went along to Jericho, the third place. When they arrived at Jericho, Elisha should have seen ruins, for that is the judgment God pronounced on that city. However, Jericho was rebuilt against God's command, and by someone from Bethel, no less (1Kgs 16:34). The power of the world, of which Jericho is a picture, still has great attraction for those who do not see the world as God sees it. The

eyes must be open for it, because it seems as if Jericho was a flourishing city. In the same way, Christianity, i.e. the professing church, seems to be a flourishing city, but faith sees that this is only a pretense. The power of godliness is denied there (2Tim 3:5a).

There was also a school of prophets in Jericho, with students who had a certain knowledge of future events. They also thought they should inform Elisha about this. But that was all they proffered. They didn't go with Elisha. The truth they knew had no effect on them.

They thought they were telling something Elisha didn't know yet. However, these truths are not primarily taught at theological colleges or bible schools, but by the Spirit of God. Pupil-prophets are at a distance. They are not idolaters, yet they do not know the true intentions of God.

### **2Kgs 2:6-8 | The Lesson of the Jordan**

*6 Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. 7 Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite [them] at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.*

Elijah was sent by the LORD to a different place each time and Elisha was again advised by Elijah not to go along. By saying this to him, Elijah put Elisha to the test every time. Each time Elisha had to consider what he was doing and make his decision. He was not forced to go with Elijah. That he went with him was his own choice. Happily, Elisha persisted until the end. He certainly did not regret that.

From Jericho the journey moves to the Jordan, to go outside God's land which had become idolatrous. They passed through the Jordan, after Elijah had struck it with his mantle. The power of Elijah lay in his conduct, his walk – of which his mantle speaks – to the glory of God. After they had passed through the Jordan, Elijah could speak of blessing for Elisha. They were, as it were, outside the camp, like Moses and Joshua were once (Exo

33:7-11). The blessing in connection with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus – of which the Jordan is a picture – lies outside the land.

Fifty student prophets did go along a part of the journey, but then did not pass through the Jordan. Thus the people gazed after Moses when he went outside the camp to the tent he had put up, where Joshua stayed (Exo 33:8). Some Christians have an eye for what the different places represent, but have no knowledge of having died and risen with Christ. They do not enjoy the heavenly blessings that result from being placed in Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3).

### 2Kgs 2:9-10 | Elisha's Question

*9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." 10 He said, "You have asked a hard thing. [Nevertheless], if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be [so]."*

When they had come to the other side of the Jordan, Elijah said to Elisha that he may make a request. Elisha then asked for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. With this he asked for something that belongs to the birthright (Deu 21:17). He badly needed this double portion as a confirmation of his service. Elisha desired Elijah's authority and strength to act as Elijah had acted. What Elisha wanted and requested was strength, so that he could be a true representative of Elijah when Elijah was absent. For us it is the power of the Holy Spirit to represent Christ, to live like Him (cf. Lk 24:49).

Elisha was aware that he was the successor of Elijah, his heir – much more so than the student prophets, who could be compared sometimes with nominal Christians, sometimes with ignorant believers. If we can call them heirs of Elijah at all, then Elisha was the 'firstborn son', therefore entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. Elisha claimed his birthright here, so to speak, after Elijah, before his departure, had given him the opportunity to make a request (verse 9a).

What is striking here is that Elisha did not wish to inherit wealth, honor or power, but a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. His request therefore

resembles the plea of Solomon, who at the beginning of his task as king, did not desire riches or power, but a wise and understanding heart to govern Israel (1Kgs 3:9,12). With this he showed that he had the right spiritual attitude. The double portion was also reflected in his service: Elisha performed about twice as many miracles as Elijah.

Elijah did not take it for granted that Elisha inherited a double portion of his spirit. He saw it as “a hard thing”, perhaps in the awareness that it was not a person’s right and was even impossible for a man to communicate the Spirit of God to others. Elijah did not know whether Elisha’s wish could be fulfilled. Therefore he put this matter in God’s hand with the following words: “If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be [so]”. Elijah could not give that double portion, but God could. He leaves the answer to God.

Elijah made the fulfillment of Elisha’s wish dependent on whether Elisha was going to be an eyewitness of his rapture. The only question then was: Will Elisha focus his eye on Elijah? Will he accept the great challenge of Elijah going to heaven and simply keep his eye on him continuously when he goes?

It is a blessed condition to be in, to renounce oneself and everything, and to look at Christ (Heb 12:2). When the eye renounces everything else and is only focused on Him, we find the power of the Holy Spirit in action. It’s that simple. Peter experienced this when he was walking on the water (Mt 14:29). Stephen also experienced it (Acts 7:56), as did Moses (Heb 11:27).

## **2Kgs 2:11 | Elijah Goes Up to Heaven**

*11 As they were going along and talking, behold, [there appeared] a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.*

The statement that they were “going along and talking” shows that they’d got to know each other’s thoughts and had confidence to share with each other. Over the years, a close relationship will have developed between the two men. “The slave does not know what his master is doing” (Jn 15:15), but Elisha was well aware of what would happen to his “master” (verses 3,5). Elisha was also not at a distance like the student prophets (verse 7),



who were not even mentioned as having personally spoken to Elijah that day (verses 3,5). He therefore emphatically called Elijah “my father”, when he said: “My father, my father! (verse 12).

We can learn a practical lesson from the way Elijah and Elisha treated each other. This is an example of how older and younger believers could and should interact with each other. Although Elisha’s faithfulness was put to the test by his older companion, we also see here the harmonious union of an older servant of the Lord with a younger servant of the Lord. Elijah was Elisha’s spiritual father (verse 12), as Paul was of Timothy, whom he called his “child” (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2). In this way young men of God are prepared for the task that awaits them.

So Elisha became an eyewitness to the ascension of Elijah, and then his eyes were opened by God Himself for the miracle that took place. And indeed Elisha was allowed to see the taking up of his master and thus to look into the invisible world (verses 11-12; cf. 2Kgs 6:17). He saw how God sent a chariot from heaven, “a chariot of fire and horses of fire”, when He took Elijah – the faithful and lonely warrior for God’s glory on earth – in His glory. Thus we also know that “while they were looking on” (Acts 1:9) the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and “sat down at the right hand of God” (Mk 16:19).

## 2Kgs 2:12 | Reaction of Elisha

*12 Elisha saw [it] and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.*

After his rapture, Elijah’s service ends and Elisha’s service begins. After his calling, Elisha first stayed for a while in the shade, in the school of exercise of God. Elisha’s task began with the question of the double portion, the question of birthright. He was given this, because the condition was met that he would see Elijah go to heaven. It says emphatically here: “Elisha saw [it]”.

Elisha called Elijah “my father” and “the chariot of Israel and its horsemen”. In doing so, he acknowledges that he was the spiritual child of Elijah, and that he saw in Elijah, the whole power of the army of Israel con-

centrated. The spiritual power of God's people rests in times of decay, in the last days, not with the masses, but is present in the individual who is a man of God, man or woman. The Lord Jesus is in every way, the true Man of God, the true Israel. He went to heaven. Who, in His power, now bear witness before God in the midst of an apostate Christianity?

Elisha "saw Elijah no more", just as we no longer see the Lord Jesus on earth. The Lord Jesus is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Paul also did not know Him any more according to the flesh (2Cor 5:16). Like Elisha, the (spiritual) Christian walks in the Spirit of the glorified Lord (Gal 5:25). Elisha is a picture of Christ coming to His people in the Spirit. The Lord Jesus said that after His going away He would come to His disciples: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (Jn 14:18). This happened when the Holy Spirit came to earth (Jn 14:16-17).

Then Elisha ripped his clothes into two pieces. He was the man of grace, but he only could be because he radically dealt to the old. We have already seen this, when after his calling by Elijah, he left his oxen and slaughtered a pair and cooked their flesh on the wood from their yoke (1Kgs 19:20-21). The tearing of his clothes meant that Elisha had put aside the old in order to put on the new (2Cor 5:17).

### **2Kgs 2:13-14 | Elijah's Mantle**

*13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.*

Elijah could not take his mantle to heaven. Thus the Lord Jesus could not continue to do the service in heaven that He had done on earth. He had surrendered it in the hands of His servants. That service would be greater, just as the service of Elisha was also greater than that of Elijah (cf. Jn 14:12). This service, however, was carried out in the character of the one who went to heaven. This also applies to us as servants who do the work of the Lord on earth. Our service should bear the features of Him Who is in heaven.

Elisha took up the mantle. With this he actually stepped into the service of the LORD instead of Elijah. He took up, so to speak, the challenge of his calling to fulfill the service associated with it. With the mantle taken up, he stood near the Jordan. Previously he was there with Elijah. Now he was alone. Each servant can be directed by another servant to the starting point of service: the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The moment comes when he must stand alone there and realize that his service is only meaningful if it is connected to what the Jordan speaks of: a dead, risen and glorified Lord in heaven. The servant must always remain aware of this.

The mantle of Elijah has the same function in this history as the staff of Moses with his passage through the Red Sea (Exo 14:16) and the ark of the covenant on his entry into Canaan (Jos 3:13). With the staff, the ark and the mantle, the water had to give way to the power of the God of Israel, who created a path for those who belong to Him.

Elisha called upon the name of the LORD here, with the words “where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” He knew that the miracle of dividing the waters when he went through them, together with Elijah (verse 8), did not occur by the power of Elijah. If he wanted the waters to divide again, it would not be by his own strength, but by the mighty working of their God. In His power, these men of God could go where a man by nature cannot go.

Elisha did not compare himself with Elijah, but called upon the LORD, the God of Elijah. That God had not changed. Elisha called upon the God who was with Elijah, that this same God may be with him. God also wants to support us with His power in the service we may do for Him. The God Who has given men of God strength, will also give us strength.

## 2Kgs 2:15-18 | The Sons of the Prophets

*15 Now when the sons of the prophets who [were] at Jericho opposite [him] saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him. 16 They said to him, “Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up*

*and cast him on some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "You shall not send." 17 But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send." They sent therefore fifty men; and they searched three days but did not find him. 18 They returned to him while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?"*

There was a great contrast between Elisha and the student prophets from Jericho, who in everything that had happened, had remained at a distance and therefore had not been eyewitnesses to Elijah's ascension (verses 7,15). The student prophets, both in Bethel and in Jericho (verses 3,5), were well informed about the impending event –perhaps by a prophetic revelation of which Elisha had also been informed. However, they did not see with illuminated eyes, like Elisha, how Elijah was triumphantly caught up to heaven. Only Elisha had had his eyes opened for the rapture of Elijah.

However, the student prophets saw something else. They noticed a change in Elisha as a result of what he had seen. The ascension of Elijah radiated, as it were, from him. Such a testimony will also radiate from us when people see in us the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. They will be reminded of Him through our actions (Acts 4:13). This Spirit did not rest on the student prophets of Jericho. They also did not see Elijah go to heaven. Christians who have no knowledge of a glorified Lord cannot show much of His Spirit, that Spirit Who bears witness of Him.

The student prophets felt that Elisha, so to speak, was spiritually above them. But they didn't get any further. They did not ask why it was that the spirit of Elijah rested on him, and even less, desired to receive the same Spirit. Instead they did as Obadiah did before Elijah and bowed down before him (1Kgs 18:7). They also reasoned exactly like Obadiah, who was afraid that the Spirit of LORD would suddenly move Elijah to another environment (1Kgs 18:12). They believed that the Spirit may have taken Elijah "up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley".

When they asked to search for Elijah, they showed that their horizon was limited to the earth. They did not take into account a real taking up to heaven. In the same way there are people in our day who are characterized on the one hand by religious confusion, and on the other hand by open idolatry. There are many well-intentioned confessors, who belong to the

“prophets of the LORD” (1Kgs 18:13), but still think of earthly things. Unfortunately, they have – at least in the practice of Christian life – no eye for a heavenly Christ (Phil 3:19-20; Col 3:1-4).

Elisha answered the question of the student prophets with a clear ‘no’. Because they wanted to search anyway, he finally agrees. Their search showed that they had not understood the truth of Elijah’s ascension. The action by fifty men of the student prophets of Jericho was both superfluous and in vain. Elijah was not found, just as Enoch in his days “was not found because God took him up” (Heb 11:5). It is possible that after Enoch’s ascension, a futile search for him was organized; the words ‘he was not found’ may indicate this. When they returned without any result, Elisha gently pointed out their unbelief to them.

### 2Kgs 2:19-22 | The Water of Jericho

*19 Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Behold now, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.” 20 He said, “Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it.” So they brought [it] to him. 21 He went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.’” 22 So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.*

Before we look further in detail to the miracles of Elisha, we must first make a general remark about them. When we see all the miracles in which Elisha is involved, there is a remarkable order to be discovered. The striking of the water of the Jordan was Elisha’s first miracle. His last miracle took place when he had already died and lay in the grave. When a dead man was thrown into his grave, the dead man came back to life (2Kgs 13:21). There is a similarity between the two miracles. They both have to do with death and resurrection. The Jordan is a picture of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the dead man thrown into the tomb of Elisha, came back to life by the touch of Elisha’s bones. This is why his first and his last miracles belong together.

Several miracles in between seem to belong together two by two. In any case, there is a connection between the following six miracles. Thus, in the

two miracles that now come to our attention first, the water of Jericho and the bears from the forest, we can see miracles that are related to nature, where one miracle was a blessing and the other miracle was judgment. The next two miracles are about what was empty and filled by the LORD: empty trenches and empty vessels were filled with water (the Word) and oil (Spirit) respectively. The following two miracles have to do with life from the dead.

The first revelation of grace in the service of Elisha took place in Jericho, the city of the curse (Jos 6:26). What man had built up seemed pleasant. The situation of the city was pleasant. But it remained the place of the curse, a place which, as we have already seen, had been rebuilt in rebellion toward God (1Kgs 16:34). Death reigned there and inhibited the prospect of fruitful life. The men of the city addressed their need to the man of God. With the words “behold now” they pointed out the situation to him to observe it with his own eyes. In this way they involved him in their situation.

Then Elisha acted. The prophet of grace came to the place of death. He did not come to judge, but to give life. That is the hallmark of our time. God’s patience still postpones judgment (2Pet 3:9b). God wants to give life, but does so on His own terms. It is only possible to escape death through the man of God, who is now the Lord Jesus.

Elisha said that they needed to bring him a new jar with salt in it. When God starts working in a place of the curse, He does so through something new, not through something that has already been used and is old. This symbolically represents that God does not restore the old nature, but makes a new beginning. He does not connect something new to something that is old (Mt 9:16). The salt speaks of “the salt of the covenant” of God with His people (Lev 2:13). Salt is a preservative and stops spoilage. That is how it is with God’s covenant that holds up against everything. God keeps His word in Christ, Who is the new Man. Only in Him is everything protected and pure. In Him are all the promises of God yes and amen (2Cor 1:20). In Him we are a new creation (2Cor 5:17).

The salt was thrown into the spring of Jericho. In the history of Christianity, i.e. the professing church, we see how its influence has brought life and prevented corruption. We see this also in the lives of converted people.

Christian influence on the world around it is life. That is what the Lord Jesus means when He tells His disciples and us: “You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13a).

Unfortunately, it must also be added that “the salt has become tasteless” (Mt 5:13b). We see now, in professing Christianity, how the salt loses its strength. All Christian values and norms derived from the Bible are increasingly disappearing from society and legislation. In the midst of increasing moral decline, the command of God for the faithful disciple, the man (man or woman) of God, is to show in marriage and family, how He intended us to live. The Christian who does this has “salt in himself” (Mk 9:50b) and will speak words of grace that are “seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6).

Such a person is a true blessing to those surrounding him, and he glorifies God in his life. He is a source that is healthy. Everyone with whom he comes into contact will experience the health giving influence of it. The life of such a person does not give rise to death or unfruitfulness, but life. This is the result of acting “according to the word of Elisha which he spoke”. The word of the man of God is nothing but the word of God. We have nothing but the Word. If we speak according to the Word of God, there will be healthy spiritual growth.

We see in this event that Elisha brought grace and blessing to a place of judgment like Jericho. In the next chapters we will see that Elisha brought blessing for what in picture represented the future faithful remnant (2 Kings 4) and that he had blessing for the nations (2 Kings 5). Like the Lord Jesus, Elisha used his power for the benefit of others and not for himself.

### **2Kgs 2:23-25 | Judgment on Mocking Boys**

*23 Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!” 24 When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. 25 He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.*

Elisha's service was not only one of grace. Three times he also judged: here about mocking boys, later about Gehazi (2Kgs 5:21-27) and then about the officer of the king (2Kgs 7:1-2,17-20). After the Jordan and Jericho, the cursed city, Elisha set off for Bethel, which means 'house of God'. At the place of the curse, blessing was brought. In connection with the house of God, judgment is brought.

Elisha went on his way to Bethel, but he didn't get there. After his meeting with and judgment of the mocking boys, he went to Carmel. The boys from Bethel had no respect for a servant of God. Such young people will not grow spiritually, but die. If young people have no respect for those who do God's work, the bears will make short work of them. We may ask ourselves what kind of young people our own local church produces. The local church can be seen as a reflection of the house of God.

These "young lads" are not innocent little children. We would estimate them to be around fifteen years old. They know what they say; they demonstrate without doubt, their contempt for the truth. Their appreciation of the truth is according to what became of Bethel: the place where the golden calf stands and the Baal is worshipped. Thus Bethel has become a town where God has no place.

"Baldhead" was a swearword and a judgment. It spoke of uncleanness (cf. Lev 13:40-44). By calling Elisha to "go up", they mocked the ascension of Elijah. They scolded Elisha, not wanting him in their town. They wanted him to leave. They can be compared to the mockers of the end time in which we live (2Pet 3:3-4). The ascension of the Lord Jesus has been scornfully dismissed. There is no belief in His ascension and even less in His return to earth.

Elisha pronounced judgment. He did so "in the Name of the LORD". Thus will come the judgment of the unbelieving mockers. Young people from Christian families, so to speak from 'Bethel', will be torn apart by ferocious and cruel female bears. David was compared to a bear who was robbed of young (2Sam 17:8; Pro 17:12; Hos 13:8). These female bears tore apart the boys who had no respect for life, for something that came from God.



After this event, Elisha went to Carmel. At Carmel, Elijah's service has reached a climax. There, Elisha will have thought about Elijah's service. Then he travelled to Samaria, where Jehoram, the king of Israel lives.

## 2 Kings 3

### **2Kgs 3:1-3 | Jehoram King Over Israel**

*1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and his mother; for he put away the [sacred] pillar of Baal which his father had made. 3 Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.*

Jehoram became king after the death of his brother Ahaziah, who was childless. Though he did evil in the sight of the LORD, he still put away an abomination that his father had made. This did not go unnoticed by the LORD.

Although his wickedness was less bad than that of his parents, he “clung to the sins of Jeroboam. His perseverance in sin is underlined by the remark at the end of the verse: “He did not depart from them.” He remained an unbeliever.

### **2Kgs 3:4-5 | Moab Rebels**

*4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. 5 But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.*

The Moabites were great cattle farmers and had been subject to the kings of Israel for many years. Israel had compelled them to pay a large tribute of cattle. The death of Ahab was the reason for Mesha, king of Moab, to withdraw from the power of Israel over him (2Kgs 1:1).

Moab is a picture of (the lusts of) the flesh. He submitted, but only for a short time and then rebels. That is always what the flesh does. Our flesh does not subject itself to God (Rom 8:7). It always desires wealth, power, prestige and pleasure. When the flesh comes to assert itself, we are the losers.

Israel had lost a lot when Moab rebelled. Their animals and their wool were blessings that God gave. If these blessings are enjoyed apart from God, they serve the flesh. If they are sanctified for God, they can be used to the glory of God. When Moab, the flesh, asserts itself, the lambs, the rams and the wool, the sacrifices, are lost for service to God. In spiritual application, this means that the resemblance to the Lord Jesus (lambs) and the devotion that is beneficial to others (rams' wool) disappear. Wool also speaks of being cleansed of sins (Isa 1:18b).

### 2Kgs 3:6-8 | Jehoshaphat Is Willing to Help Jehoram

*6 And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. 7 Then he went and sent [word] to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." 8 He said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "The way of the wilderness of Edom."*

The loss of income due to the Moab rebellion led Jehoram to mobilize an army. He wanted the Moabites to be subject to him again. He also appealed to Jehoshaphat to go to battle with him. Jehoshaphat responded favorably to this request. He had also responded earlier, in the same way, to a request from Ahab to go along with him. He promised his cooperation with the same words he also spoke to Ahab (1Kgs 22:4).

Jehoshaphat seems not to have learned anything from what he experienced with Ahab. Believers learn with difficulty from their experiences. Abraham and Isaac also made the same mistake twice. We are only surprised if we don't know ourselves well.

Jehoram asks which way they should go up. The non-spiritual believer Jehoshaphat advises to take a detour along the south side of Moab to attack him from that side. This also obliges the king of Edom, who at that time was subject to Jehoshaphat, to participate.

The answer to subject this rebellious king to the authority of the king of Israel again was not in the united armies of these three kings. In application, this means that the flesh cannot be controlled by the flesh. That is a useless

and damaging waste of time. They must learn to call to God. That is where they will need to be brought.

### **2Kgs 3:9-12 | Elisha Is Consulted**

*9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them. 10 Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." 11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." 12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.*

The three kings set off together. Then something happened that they haven't taken into account at all: after seven days there was a lack of water. If a believer goes out with unbelievers, this can only lead to a lack. God cannot give a blessing in this way.

Jehoram reproached the LORD about this. He never took God into account, but when things went wrong, he blamed God. That's how many people are today. Without water it is impossible to overcome Moab, the flesh. This is the situation in which the greater part of Christianity, i.e. the professing church, finds itself. They try to bring into subjection all kinds of expressions of the flesh that cause destruction. Without the water of God's Word, however, that is impossible.

Then it turned out that Jehoshaphat was a believer and thus distinguished himself from Jehoram. He asked for a prophet of the LORD. Jehoram did not answer him; but one of his servants, one of the common people does. Jehoram himself apparently did not know of a prophet of the LORD. The servant referred to Elisha who apparently had gone with the army. The LORD will have made it clear to Elisha to join them.

Jehoshaphat knew him and that the word of the LORD was with him. The three kings go to him. Elisha hadn't been a target of kings, like Elijah. It was because their fate depended on him, that they come to him. We see

that here, Elisha was not called upon to appear before those men. It was the other way around; the great men of the earth went to the man of God.

### 2Kgs 3:13-19 | Elisha's Counsel

*13 Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings [together] to give them into the hand of Moab." 14 Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you. 15 But now bring me a minstrel." And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 16 He said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Make this valley full of trenches.' 17 For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts. 18 This is but a slight thing in the sight of the LORD; He will also give the Moabites into your hand. 19 Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.'"*

Elisha was a man without fear. Without any respect for the high company, he said to the king of Israel that he wanted nothing to do with him. There was no spiritual connection. He even said sarcastically that Jehoram should go to the prophets of his parents. Jehoram's answer was what he had said earlier that his predicament had been ordered by the LORD.

Elisha said once again and more strongly that he didn't want to have anything to do with Jehoram. The man remained wicked. The acknowledgement that the LORD had brought about the situation had not led him to repentance. All he wanted was to get out of this miserable situation, nothing more. It is because Jehoshaphat was in this company that Elisha didn't turn around and leave. It seems, however, that he was so indignant by Jehoram's attitude and also by that of Jehoshaphat that his mind had first to come to rest. For this he needed melodious, soothing music.

Spiritually minded believers are not able to speak a word from the Lord in every circumstance. Sometimes such agitation may have arisen in the

mind that it is necessary to come to rest first. There must be harmony in a situation of discord. This rest can sometimes be obtained by a melodious instrument. Christ is the heavenly harp player Who gives peace to troubled minds. Christ is the keynote to which every need in our lives can be attuned, so that the distress can be borne and there is promise of a solution.

While the music is played, Elisha came to rest and the LORD's hand came upon him. He then started to speak and declared what needed to be done. In the valley, a picture of the place of humility, trenches must be dug so that the trenches could be filled with water. Digging trenches so that they can be filled with water while there is drought, speaks of faith. Digging speaks of taking away earth. Dirt that prevents water from entering the trenches must be removed.

Everything that can prevent water from flowing must be removed. In practice, this means that room must be made for the Word of God, of which water is a picture (Eph 5:26; Jn 15:3). Water is also a picture of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39). Room for the Word of God also means room for the Spirit. Word and Spirit always work together.

When trenches had been dug, they could be filled with water to save the kings and their armies and cattle: the more trenches, the more water. In that way they would be able to defeat Moab. What a lot of 'earth' sometimes needs to be removed from our lives and that of the local church before the living water of the Word can flow into our lives and the local churches.

The digging does not fill the trenches with water. All we can do is make room for the water. By a miracle of the LORD, by the faith with which the trenches are dug, these trenches shall be filled with water. There are no accompanying, impressive signs, but when obstacles are removed, the way is cleared for the blessing of God. He will miraculously fill our lives, if they are lived in humility, with His presence.

The filling of the trenches with water is seen as a matter that is "a slight thing in the sight of the LORD" (verse 18). The grace of God goes even further, for He would give Moab into their hand. If our lives are lived in the power of God's Word and God's Spirit, the result will be that the flesh is overcome. The victory will be total. God does not do half a job.

**2Kgs 3:20-27 | Moab Slaughtered**

*20 It happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. 21 Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned and stood on the border. 22 They rose early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite [them] as red as blood. 23 Then they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely fought together, and they have slain one another. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!" 24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites arose and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, slaughtering the Moabites. 25 Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees, until in Kir-hareseth [only] they left its stones; however, the slingers went about [it] and struck it. 26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not. 27 Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.*

The water began to flow around the time when the morning grain offering was offered in Jerusalem. The grain offering speaks of the Lord Jesus. All blessings that God allows to flow are based on God's value of the Lord Jesus and are connected with Him. God counts the value of all things in the world accordingly.

The Moabites only saw what the Israelites were doing. They had no idea what was really happening. That can only be perceived by faith. The Moabites believed that the Israelites were getting ready to attack. That is why they were mobilizing all those who could fight, even if they had minimal capability. They didn't realize that they would be beaten even more thoroughly. When they got up in the morning, they saw that the color of the water was as the color of blood. They came to the wrong conclusion from this and thought that they would achieve an easy victory and take a lot of booty.

The waters that meant life for the three kings meant death for the Moabites. Thus the Passover in Egypt was a feast for Israel, but for the Egyptians it meant judgment. In the same way, during the exodus from Egypt the cloud was light for Israel, but it was darkness for the Egyptians. The world and the flesh know nothing of the things of God (1Cor 2:14). What is refreshment for God's people is death for the world.

The Moabites revealed themselves and threw caution to the wind. By the time they discovered what was really going on, it was too late. For them there was no escape from defeat. The Israelites destroyed Moab, their fields, water sources and trees according to the word of Elisha in verse 19. Through the refreshment of the water they were able to destroy Moab's sources of strength. The offspring of the flesh, which comes forth from the flesh, also dies. The only way to fight the flesh is through the Word of God - applied by the Spirit of God.

The king of Moab still tried to break through to reach the Edomites to try to form an alliance with them. However, he did not succeed. He even came into such extremity that he sacrificed his heir to the throne, perhaps a young man, to his god Chemosh. Perhaps Chemosh would be softened by this sacrifice to provide a better outcome.

There was great wrath against Israel, perpetuated by the LORD. The cause of this was the Israelites' desire for revenge, which was so great that Masha, king of Moab, felt compelled to commit this atrocity. The Israelites had forgotten that the LORD had shown mercy to them. They took revenge in a disproportionate way and thereby presented God, the God of His people, as unmerciful. This false representation of God could not go unpunished. How His wrath was expressed is not mentioned. However, it became clear to the people that they could no longer stay in Moab and returned to their own country.



## 2 Kings 4

### Introduction

There is much 'death' in this chapter: a student prophet (verse 1); the husband of the Shunammite, in his 'dead body' (verse 14); the son of the Shunammite (verse 20); death in the pot (verse 40). There is also a lot of life in this chapter, because death is always followed by life. Life, not death, has the last word.

### 2Kgs 4:1 | A Widow Comes to Elisha

*1 Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."*

The history of the widow's oil and the history of the three kings in the previous chapter are both about debtors. Mesha had to pay tribute and the woman also had to pay a debt. The difference is that the king of Moab could pay, but did not want to, while the woman wanted to, but couldn't, because she was poor.

The previous history was about three people, three kings, namely the king of Israel, Jehoram, the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom. This history is also about three people, namely the widow and her two sons. There is despair in both histories. The kings were about to die due to lack of water and therefore appealed to the man of God. Then Elisha appears and helps. The woman also called on Elisha and he comes and helps. Both histories end with a son. In the first one a son is killed, in the second there is life for two sons.

In the first history the man of God ordered to dig trenches, empty trenches. This required a lot of hard work. In the second the woman had to collect empty vessels. This also required hard work. In both histories what was empty is filled, but with a different content. The trenches are filled with water, the vessels are filled with oil.

Water is a picture of the Word of God. This is how it was applied in the previous chapter. However, water is also a symbol of the Spirit of God, just like oil. Water and oil as a picture of the Holy Spirit we see in the “streams of living water” (Jn 7:39) and in the “anointing from the Holy One” (1Jn 2:20). Water and oil represent different aspects of the work of the Spirit. How the Spirit works, we see for example in the Gospel of Luke, where we meet people filled with the Spirit: John, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon (cf. Eph 5:18b).

A widow came with her need to Elisha, asking him for help. She reminded Elisha that he knew her husband, and testified that her husband had been faithful and obedient to the Word of God, as Elisha also knew. His wife and children followed his example. The man had feared God.

A widow was a needy person (cf. Jam 1:27a), someone who is dependent on the LORD. The woman told him her situation. Elisha did not contest the creditor’s right. In the person of the woman it is about a believer who is in miserable circumstances. She is a picture of a believer under the law. The law leads the spiritual life to slavery.

This is about the righteousness of the flesh, the claims of the law, the slavery of the flesh. The sons were threatened to be made slaves. In Acts 15 we read about an attempt to subject the believers to the law and how the apostles reacted to it (Acts 15:1-31; see also the letter to the Galatians). The law is opposed to the freedom of the Spirit.

### **2Kgs 4:2-4 | Counsel of Elisha**

*2 Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.” 3 Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, [even] empty vessels; do not get a few. 4 And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full.”*

The woman was poor, but she still had a jar of oil. She thought it was worthless, but if she brought this to the man of God, she could satisfy the creditor’s claim. Through the Spirit, the oil speaking of Him, the believer can meet the requirement of the law (Rom 8:4). The woman can live by

“what remains”. She didn’t know all this yet, but we see it in the course of this history.

There is still a nice lesson to be learned from the jar of oil that the woman possessed. It was not much, but she brought it to the man of God, so that the little bit of oil became a large stream of oil. It is the same for us. If we go to the Lord with what we have, He will use it for our blessing. We see such a thing with the staff of Moses (Exo 4:2), with the widow in Zarephath (1Kgs 17:12-14) and with the boy with the five loaves and two fish (Mk 6:38). So each of us has a jar of oil. The jar is a picture of our body and the oil represents the Holy Spirit. We have enough through the Spirit Who dwells within us to fulfill all the claims of the law (Rom 8:4). Through the Spirit, God can do great things.

Elisha asked the woman for her cooperation. What the man of God said in his request, appealed to her faith. She was to experience that the LORD gives blessing when faith is present. The woman was urged to think of others. At first she was only occupied with herself. Now Elisha said, as it were: ‘Look at the need around you and you forget yourself. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest” (Jn 4:35b). We have that here. The woman started to get an interest for her surroundings. In the execution of her assignment she involved her sons as well.

To do what the man of God says, she had to go inside and close the door behind her. Whoever is discouraged can pray in the inner room. In prayer, the ‘neighbors’, unbelieving family members and colleagues, for example, can be brought inside into the presence of the Lord. That will be a blessing for all for whom we pray. Seeking the Lord in faith is not to be displayed in public, but takes place in the inner room (cf. Mt 6:6). The result is seen in public.

## 2Kgs 4:5-7 | The Miracle of the Oil

*5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing [the vessels] to her and she poured. 6 When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not one vessel more.” And the oil stopped. 7 Then she came and told the man of*

*God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you [and] your sons can live on the rest."*

The vessels had all been different in size, shape and use. They were all equal in one thing: they were all empty. You can't get anything out of an empty vessel, you can only put something in it. This is the way in which the sinner can come to God. Every sinner is different, but if he is empty of himself, God can fill him with His Spirit.

As long as vessels are added, the oil continued to flow. Similarly, every request of Abraham concerning Sodom was answered by the LORD (Gen 18:23-32). On the other hand, it is also a serious word. The grace of God continues to flow until the last vessel is filled, until the last sinner has converted to be added to the church. After that, the flowing stops and it is no longer possible to convert.

The flowing stops when there are no more vessels. We must have the courage to ask a lot. It shall be done to you according to your faith (Mt 9:29). Much faith, much blessing. The woman always had enough oil to fill all the vessels. When there are no vessels left, it will be the end of the slavery of the flesh. It is not about a big or small gift, but about using the little oil we have. It is the Spirit Who is given to each of us, through whom we can pray – not for our own sake, but – for others. Forgetting ourselves and thinking about others is a basic principle of being a Christian (Phil 2:4-5,25-26). People are interested in things, God is interested in people. Faith will join God in this.

The woman is also a picture of the faithful remnant in the end time. The Spirit will be poured out on the remnant and also on all who will enter the kingdom of peace. All flesh (all vessels) will be filled with God's Spirit (Joel 2:28a).

The oil is sold to spread blessing elsewhere. The proceeds were used to pay the debt. The surplus was sufficient for the rest of her life to show the fruit of the Spirit. When the man of God said that she and her sons "can live on the rest", he meant life in the full sense of the word. He wanted them to rejoice in life as a gift from God.

For us, it means a life lived in the power of the Spirit, with our eyes on the Lord Jesus in glory. This allows us to enjoy the victories that result from His work on the cross and His glorification in heaven.

## 2Kgs 4:8-11 | A Room for Elisha

*8 Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. 9 She said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. 10 Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, [that] he can turn in there." 11 One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested.*

If we let the Holy Spirit work, if we "live on the rest" (verse 7), it means that we learn to know the power of the resurrection. We see that in this history. "Live on the rest" means living on the riches of the Spirit. We see that in the Shunammite. The poor widow of verse 1 has become a prominent or rich woman, a woman of stature. However, she lacked something, and that was a son. There was love, there were maternal feelings, but there was no one to whom she could express those feelings. Now the lesson is taught that the spiritual riches can be enjoyed on the basis of death and resurrection.

The woman's heart was in the right place; she was hospitable, and Elisha liked to make use of her hospitality. Elijah was a lonely man, but also a man who enjoyed company. It was a blessing for Elisha to have a house where he was welcome in the deadly climate of godless Israel. Thus the Lord Jesus had a house on earth in Bethany where He was welcome and in Mary a woman who understood Him.

Several people play a role in this history, all different, and from all these people we can learn:

1. The *mother* has a care for people, for Elisha and her son. In the church are people who care for others.
2. Elisha is the *teacher*, the man with the Word of God.

3. Gehazi is the *servant*.
4. We can see the *boy* as a picture of young people in the church.
5. The *father*, a man who does not take responsibility, represents the carnal believer, the man of outward faith.

The woman had spiritual discernment. She had discovered that Elisha was a man of God and that he was holy. That also says something about the walk, the behavior of Elisha. He lived a life devoted to God. That is why she granted him a separate room. She no longer wanted him as a visitor, but as a continuous guest. Thus it is a desire of Christ that we should not have Him as a Visitor of our heart and life, but as a constantly present Guest.

She talked to her husband about her plan, with which she acknowledged him as her head. The woman had a separate room with a sober interior built on the roof for Elisha. She didn't overload him with all sorts of benefits. Therefore, so to speak, Elisha would not be tempted to go to this house because of the abundance he gets there all the time.

The small upper chamber is a picture of faith exercised by the church, which is represented by a house. In the inventory we can also see a spiritual meaning:

1. A "bed" speaks of rest. Christ gives rest. Sound doctrine gives rest.
2. A "table" speaks of fellowship.
3. A "chair" is to sit and study, to receive education and also to pass on teaching.
4. The "candlestick" speaks of education by the Holy Spirit and the spreading of light.

## **2Kgs 4:12-17 | Elisha Promises the Woman a Son**

12 Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him. 13 He said to him, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?'" And she answered, "I live among my own people." 14 So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Truly she has no son and her husband

*is old.” 15 He said, “Call her.” When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 16 Then he said, “At this season next year you will embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.” 17 The woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her.*

Elisha wanted to express his gratitude for what the woman had done for him. To this end, he had the means and influence of higher authorities. When he suggested to her to use these resources and influence for her benefit, she rejected that offer, with the motive: “I live among my own people”. Even with all her beautiful qualities, she also exhibited contentment. She was content to live among her own people, who were God’s people. She displayed the rare combination of godliness and contentment (1Tim 6:6).

Elisha asked his servant what she lacked. Gehazi appeared to know her hidden wish. He also knew that this wish could no longer be fulfilled humanly. He informed Elisha of this. The reaction of Elisha was beautiful. He acknowledged the appropriateness of what Gehazi had noted. He used the information of his servant who later proved to be a bad servant. Bad people sometimes have a good insight into situations in which even a man of God apparently has no insight. He commanded Gehazi to call the woman. Gehazi obeyed and the woman came.

Elisha knew God’s thoughts. He promised her that in a year’s time she would embrace a son (cf. Gen 18:14). The woman could not believe it, but the word of the man of God came true. The boy was born by the word of God from the mouth of the man of God. It was an act of God. Isaac, Samson, Samuel, and John were all born through God’s intervention.

## 2Kgs 4:18-20 | The Death of the Son

*18 When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father to the reapers. 19 He said to his father, “My head, my head.” And he said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.” 20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and [then] died.*

When the boy had grown up, he went out to his father and to the reapers. His stay on the field caused him a headache. It was not a common head-

ache, but an unbearable pain. He told his father of his pain. His father, however, did not have any interest in the boy. All the father did was to order a servant to bring his son to his wife.

In the church there are those who have no interest in youth. They quickly assess something and give commands to others. He was an old man (verse 14) and a man of traditions (verse 23). There was no life in him. His wife didn't seem to trust him either. We can deduce this from the rest of history.

The mother was not only "prominent" with regard to material possessions; she was not only materially a rich woman, but she was also rich in spiritual insight. She had discernment and saw things to which her husband was blind. She took her son "on her lap". Do we take our children on our lap, do we pray for them? While she had her son on her lap, he died. This caused deep exercise in the woman. The mercies and gifts of God are not without a deep trial for faith.

### **2Kgs 4:21-28 | The Woman Brings Her Need to Elisha**

*21 She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut [the door] behind him and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and return." 23 He said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "[It will be] well." 24 Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, "Drive and go forward; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you." 25 So she went and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Behold, there is the Shunammite. 26 Please run now to meet her and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." 27 When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to push her away; but the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me." 28 Then she said, "Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'"*

The death of her child did not make the woman desperate. She took him to the bed of the man of God, which thereby became a deathbed. This was the most beautiful place in the house. She closed the door. It is like with



our children being baptized. In their baptism they are identified with the death of the Lord Jesus (Rom 6:3).

The death of her child did not make her passive, but active. She did not reconcile herself with the fact that her child had died, but she wanted to go to the man of God who had promised her this child. Before she went, she told her husband that she was going to the man of God. Her husband did not rightly consider her. He only asked a question and also asserted that there was no reason to go to the man of God. He felt no need and thought only in terms of religion.

The man represents people who can only think of God in connection with special days and fulfilling religious obligations. He is someone with an orthodox lifeless belief. The woman could not share her grief with her husband. At his request, she informed him that it was "well". She knew that she would find no understanding with him for her grief and for the path of faith she was taking.

Then she went on her way to the man of God. She did not do this at an easy pace, but in a hurry. The child had died. For her husband, this urgency was not necessary. Her need was great, but also her confidence in the help of the man of God. That's why she hurried. When Elisha recognized her from afar, he sent his servant Gehazi to her, to ask her if she, her husband and her child were well. The woman answered Gehazi's questions politely, but was not satisfied with the servant. She also said to him that it was "well", because she knew that even he couldn't understand her if she told him her need. She also knew he wouldn't be able to help her. Her faith was only satisfied with the man of God.

The woman overcame two obstacles for faith. The first obstacle consisted of the religious obligations of the natural man we see in her husband. The second obstacle was the behavior of Gehazi. In Gehazi we see someone who presented himself as the protector of what he saw as appropriate behavior towards the man of God, missing the faith of the man of God. Both obstacles are expressions of orthodoxy without life.

When the woman met Elisha, she threw herself at his feet and seized them. Then Gehazi did what the disciples did when they rebuked those who brought children to the Lord Jesus (Mt 19:13-14). When we misunderstand

a situation, it is easier to expel people, than to gauge hearts full of grief. Just as the Lord Jesus stood up for the children, Elisha stood up for the woman.

But he was not like the Lord Jesus Who knew everything. Elisha also had to learn a lesson. A man of God is always in the school of God. Someone who brings the Word of God does not always have all the answers. After his acknowledgment that he did not know what the woman was concerned about, the woman spoke. She did not say outright that her son had died, but expressed her shocked confidence.

### **2Kgs 4:29-31 | Elisha Sends Gehazi**

*29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not salute him, and if anyone salutes you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face." 30 The mother of the lad said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." And he arose and followed her. 31 Then Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff on the lad's face, but there was no sound or response. So he returned to meet him and told him, "The lad has not awakened."*

Elisha sent Gehazi with his staff to bring the boy back to life again. He also instructed him not to let himself be held up by a greeting along the way. An oriental salutation was an extensive affair and would cause long delays. Apparently, Elisha had to learn even more. He also had to learn that his staff only had meaning when it was in *his* hand, the hand of the man of God.

The woman was also not content with a staff in the hand of the servant. She was in faith with the LORD who lives and with His prophet who was connected with the living LORD and therefore lives himself. She asked for life. With this she persuaded Elisha to go with her and follow her on her way to her child.

Gehazi did everything that was required of him, but there was no result. The outcome for Gehazi was the same as it was with the disciples who could not heal a lunatic boy (Mk 9:18b). The reason for this is that in his heart there was a desire for earthly riches, as the end of the next chapter shows. That excluded personal strength of faith. With him everything was

outwardly as it should be, but inwardly there was a denial of the power of faith (2Tim 3:5a).

### 2Kgs 4:32-37 | Elisha Raises the Boy

*32 When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. 33 So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD. 34 And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. 36 He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." 37 Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out.*

These verses speak of the simplicity of the man of God's actions and his dependence on the LORD. He does not seek publicity, but looks to the LORD. The man of God identified himself with the dead boy. He made himself one with his words ("mouth"), with his insights ("eyes") and with his actions ("hands"). That warmed the boy and life returns in him.

Elisha also walked in the house "once back and forth". Once the action had been taken, he checked to see if there was a possible cause somewhere in the house for the boy's death. We too must regularly walk "back and forth" in our homes to see if things have come into our families that are spiritually damaging to our children and can even make them averse to faith. Let us pray that the Lord opens our eyes to these things and that we radically remove them out of the house.

For the third time the woman was called. This time her son is restored to her by resurrection (Heb 11:35a). Worship of the LORD was her first reaction, then she took up her boy, back from the dead and resurrected. She now owned her son in resurrection life.

### 2Kgs 4:38-41 | Death Removed From the Pot

*38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal, [there was] a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Put on the*

*large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.” 39 Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know [what they were]. 40 So they poured [it] out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the stew, they cried out and said, “O man of God, there is death in the pot.” And they were unable to eat. 41 But he said, “Now bring meal.” He threw it into the pot and said, “Pour [it] out for the people that they may eat.” Then there was no harm in the pot.*

In this history we learn to appreciate what valuable food is by first experiencing what is worthless, yes, life-threatening food. There was a famine in the land, but Elisha told his servant to put a large pot on the fire. In this time of scarcity, the man of God wanted to prepare a feast meal to feed the student prophets with good food.

One of the student prophets went to the field to get ingredients for the stew. He came back with his lap full of wild gourds. He sliced the gourds (to see how they look inside) and put them in the stew pot. It may have been watched by others, for it says that “they did not know [what they were]”. Together they were responsible for an ill-considered addition to what the man of God had already done in the pot.

What is happening here, is an illustration of the danger Paul warned about in his letter to the Colossians. The Colossians did not want to replace the Lord Jesus with something else, but they wanted to add something to simple belief in Him. They wanted to add human philosophy to all the treasures of wisdom that are their part in Christ. Doing this means death in the pot.

The result is that where life should be, death is present. The personal contribution is not innocent, but turns out to be deadly. The spiritual downfall is the result of wanting more than God gives us. Paul was the man of God who put the large pot before the Colossians, but the healthy food in it was spoiled, by what the Colossians added to it.

The man of God knew how to remove death from the pot: by adding something to it that overcomes death. The gourds could not be removed, but something could be added that eliminated the danger. Meal had to be add-

ed. This represents in picture, the introduction of the Lord Jesus into the lives of believers. That takes death away and restores life.

## **2Kgs 4:42-44 | Multiplication of the Loaves**

*42 Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give [them] to the people that they may eat." 43 His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give [them] to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have [some] left over.'" 44 So he set [it] before them, and they ate and had [some] left over, according to the word of the LORD.*

A man came to Elisha with "bread of the first fruits". According to what the law says about 'first fruits', the man should have brought these loaves to the priests in Jerusalem (Deu 18:4-5). By bringing them to Elisha, the man acknowledged Elisha as the true representative of God in the land. He did not want to bring these first fruits to priests, who had defiled themselves by mixing the worship of the LORD with the worship of the Baal.

This man was possibly one of the faithful among the general apostasy, one of the 7,000 who did not bend their knees before Baal (1Kgs 19:18). Thus we still encounter people from Baal-shalishah today, people who do not go with apostate Christianity, but instead serve the Lord faithfully and bring their gifts to Him.

The loaves were barley loaves. That reminds us of the Lord Jesus as the bread of life. The feeding of about 5,000 men by the Lord Jesus, was done with "five barley loaves and two fish" (Jn 6:9). Isn't it telling that in John 6 further on, in connection with the food, He speaks extensively about Himself as the "bread of life"? Because these were "first fruits", we can link them to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. These breads speak of the Lord Jesus in the resurrection. He is the first fruit of the heavenly land. In the picture, this man set his mind on "the things above" (Col 3:1). With that, he came to the man of God. Thus we may go to the Lord Jesus with all we have seen and enjoyed of Him.

The loaves are given to Elisha. However, he did not use them for himself, but to feed others with them. He shared the loaves with those who

were with him to listen to him. They were invigorated and strengthened by them as well. Elisha knew the value of them. The twenty loaves of bread seem to be too little to feed a hundred men, but in a miraculous way it became more than enough. This did not happen because Elisha added salt or flour to the loaves or by stretching himself over them – we saw this in earlier miracles – but by speaking the word of the LORD. As a result, the loaves were sufficient food for all those who were with him. By the man of God it was plenty and even some was left over. All were satiated and had so much that they could distribute the remainder to others.

If we start distributing what we first brought to the Lord Jesus, we will never come short. This is what we also see in the multiplication of the loaves by the Lord Jesus (Mt 14:20-21; 15:37-38).

## 2 Kings 5

### Introduction

The history of Elisha is characterized by actions much more than by many words. But those actions – which are pictures with a meaning; they express something – speak a clear language. This is also the case in this history. In 2 Kings 4 we see the prophet among the people of God. The lessons there are for believers for their spiritual growth.

In 2 Kings 5 the prophet goes to work beyond the sphere of the people of God, for he is the prophet of grace, and grace is not limited to Israel (Lk 4:27). There are many lepers in Israel at that time, as the Lord Jesus says. That is a shocking picture of the uncleanness and corruption of the people. Not one of the people is cleansed of his leprosy, because no one appeals to God's grace. Without any claim, the pagan Naaman is cleansed and healed. Only God can do that. His grace extends to those who don't belong to His people.

### 2Kgs 5:1 | The Great Naaman

*1 Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, [but he was] a leper.*

Naaman is a great man in the world. Moreover, the LORD has been involved previously with him. He has achieved victories which the LORD has given him. God is already busy with this man. However, he has a big problem. In all his distinction, prestige and riches, he is leprous. No matter how great a person is in other people's eyes, in the eyes of God he is leprous, sinful.

We see here that God governs the whole world. He is not only the God of Israel. He has a special connection with Israel, but that does not mean that He has nothing to do with other nations. Although since the flood He has let the nations go on their own ways (Acts 14:16) and has no direct involve-

ment with them. He is the One Who has the course of all world events in His hand and directs them. He leads everything to His goal.

### **2Kgs 5:2-3 | A Little Girl**

*2 Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy."*

Verse 2 forms a great contrast with Verse 1. In verse 1 we see the great world. In verse 2 the circumstances of the life of a little girl. Naaman is "highly respected", the girl is "a little girl". The whole story of this chapter is 'made' by this little girl, whose name we don't even know. But God has a plan with the life of this girl. He wants to use her for Naaman's healing. He uses everything for His purpose, even the wrong deeds of people, like robbing this girl.

The great man depends on a little girl for his curing. She does not seek revenge, but wants to do good. She does something very simple. She does not give a sermon, but refers to the man of God. This way we can take people to meetings where God's Word is brought, or to people who bring God's Word. She has not experienced that Elisha has cured a leper, but she has faith and she knows that there is a man of God. How many times has a child's finger pointed an adult the right direction!

The girl must have experienced a lot. It may happen to you to be taken as booty by hostile men. Maybe she has seen her parents killed. She was taken away, without a chance to ever return home. Everything that is of value to a child is only a memory for her. Such a memory can be a torment in a situation like hers. All her dreams about a bright future have been shattered. She is a slave of the wife of the general of a hostile country. All she has experienced could embitter her.

She could have watched the leper Naaman with gloating; with intense satisfaction she could observe this evildoer, the destroyer of her life, die a slow death. However, this is not the case with her. She seems to come from a God-fearing family, a 'remnant' family. She knows the prophet Elisha and knows that God's power works through the prophet. Instead of seek-



ing revenge, she is seeking the welfare of her master and, through his wife, she points out to him the man of God in Israel.

Here we see the special guidance of God. Often, people are brought into God's kingdom by the laborious efforts of others, by what others have to suffer. We know that from countries where the believers are being persecuted. How many suffering believers have already been an eternal blessing to those who persecuted them. In this history, without this girl, there would have been no healing of Naaman's body nor salvation of his soul.

We also see here, how in God's government, the greatness of international politics and the smallness of personal circumstances unite. We see that today. God rules through consultation in parliaments and ministries, where the strategy to be pursued is discussed. God also rules by everyday inconspicuous encounters, a phone call, a visit. God is above all and orders everything to work together to fulfill His purpose.

## 2Kgs 5:4-7 | Help Question to the King of Israel

*4 Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel." 5 Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand [shekels] of gold and ten changes of clothes. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending [word] to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me."*

Naaman's wife believes what the girl says. This means that this girl has always done her job faithfully and has proven to be reliable in everything. She hasn't been sloppy in her work. She must have been an exemplary slave. Without having to be exhorted to do so, she has complied with the Scripture: "[Urge] bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect" (Tit 2:9-10). Maybe she has spoken about her home situation.

Anyway, Naaman's wife tells her husband that there is someone in Israel who can cure him.

Naaman also believes what the girl said. But he does not act upon it. He goes to his own king. He needs his influence, he thinks. It was also difficult for him to go to a hostile people on his own as a general. He also needs the king's consent.

His lord wants to help his army commander to be cured. He does so in his own way, without there being any faith. Diplomatically, the king of Aram, or Syria, writes to the king of Israel asking him to cure his general. Perhaps he assumes that the man about whom he hears such good news, must be at the court of the king, in his service as his private healer.

He also gives his general a huge gift to take with him. In Elisha he sees no more than a healer from whom you can buy healing. It will appear that this is not the case. Many people think that you can do something for the forgiveness of sins. The heinous indulgence that the roman-catholic church, inspired by the devil, has come up with, is an example of this. In this way, the king of Syria seems to want to give the king of Israel the honor of healing.

This type of diplomacy, however, does not achieve anything and is even counterproductive. The king of Israel feels attacked. Theoretically he knows God. He is horrified that he is considered to be as God to be able to cure the leper, for indeed only God can cure leprosy (cf. Gen 30:2). In practice, however, he does not take God into account at all. He only thinks about his own position. He can only think on a political level. He, who like no other as leader of God's people, must show that there is a God who can cure, sees only horizontally. He and his people bear the Name of God, but do not acknowledge Him. Is this not the case in most of today's Christianity, i.e. the professing church?

The king does not think of Elisha, although the prophet lives close to him. Many spiritual leaders today also do not point to the Lord Jesus, because they only think about their own position. They too have no answer to the questions of life.

**2Kgs 5:8-10 | Elisha Lets Naaman Come to Him**

*8 It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent [word] to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and [you will] be clean."*

While the king may be walking back and forth in his room and discussing how to deal with this crisis with his ministers, there is a message from Elisha. Elisha has heard of the king's reaction and is indignant. He commands the king to send Naaman to him, so that at least Naaman will know that there is a prophet who reveals the words of God.

It will have been a remarkable display. The whole distinguished company, the whole impressive parade, leaves the king's palace and parks in front of the prophet's humble home. Then a messenger from Elisha comes out to bring Naaman the good news of how he can be cured.

Elisha himself does not come out, not even to greet Naaman. He doesn't want to meet Naaman's splendor with an eye to eye view and remains unmoved by the brilliance of the world. Naaman's greatness means nothing to him, but Naaman's leprosy much. Nor does Elisha want to put himself in the foreground. Only his word is important and that can be conveyed by a messenger.

**2Kgs 5:11-12 | Naaman's Response**

*11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' 12 Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.*

Naaman is very upset about this treatment. How does Elisha dare to treat him like this! As a great man, he wants to be treated with respect, even when it comes to his healing, which he cannot achieve himself. He also wants to pay for it. He is doubly offended: he is not treated in the way he

wants, as well as being expected to do something that he considers to be below his dignity.

The words “behold, I thought” indicate that Naaman has his own ideas about his healing; Elisha had to come out and perform a fitting ritual to heal him. But Elisha treats him like a leper and Naaman doesn’t want that. Naaman has written the script for his healing and thinks that the prophet would want to do it that way. That’s all. He expects a spectacle, a dazzling show from this miracle worker.

How often do we already have an idea of how God should solve our problem? And if it does not go according to our expectations, are we not disappointed in God? We not only want God’s blessings, but we also want to indicate how He should give them to us. Thus we want to make the sovereign God our ‘messenger boy’. Or we see God as a dispenser: throw in a prayer and you can take out your desired article.

Naaman has two problems: his leprosy and his pride. He must first be freed from his pride and then be cleansed of his leprosy. Naaman has his arguments for not simply doing what the prophet has said. Why the Jordan? Why that way? Why not in another river? He knows rivers that are bigger and cleaner.

But he does not know the difference between these rivers and the Jordan. What makes the Jordan different from any other river is that the Jordan speaks of death, the death undergone by the Lord Jesus. Only there you can find salvation. In other rivers, which also speak of death, the result is destruction without healing. Those rivers do not help.

Naaman gets angry because he has not surrendered to grace. He has yet to learn that. Naaman must learn to see himself as a corrupt Syrian (cf. Deu 26:5). The Israelite must also learn this. Religious flesh wants to be caressed, but it must be judged.

What Naaman, in the picture, must learn is that salvation can only be found in the foolishness of the cross. Paul preached this foolishness in Corinth (1Cor 1:22-25), where the believers also thought so highly of themselves. Many people – and sometimes also believers! – do not like that the gospel demands humility. They do not like the simplicity of the gospel, nor the narrow way of the gospel. It may seem foolishness to put your trust in

Someone Who died on a shameful cross, the ultimate example of weakness and misery, but it is the only way to be saved. He is salvation; or else you will be lost forever.

### **2Kgs 5:13-14 | Naaman Becomes Clean**

*13 Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you [to do some] great thing, would you not have done [it]? How much more [then], when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 14 So he went down and dipped [himself] seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.*

A number of people on his way show Naaman the way to salvation. First there is his wife's maid. She points him to the prophet through his wife. The second person is the messenger of Elisha. He brings him the Word of the prophet. The third time it is his servants. It is now a personal contact, servants who talk to him to do what has been said to him. It is about using the means proposed to him. It is the aftercare, the watering of the message.

The servants have a good relationship with Naaman. There appears to be confidentiality between them. They persuade him with simple arguments and remind him of the simplicity of what is required of him, which appears to be the big obstacle at this time. The servants help him get over it.

At the insistence of his servants, Naaman relinquishes all dignity. He humbles himself before the eyes of his subordinates. The great man becomes a little boy. By becoming a little child he gets a new life resembling that of a little boy. Not only humility is required, but also faith is needed. He must not dip himself in the Jordan five or six times, but seven times (cf. Jos 6:2-4). All his money and his king's intercession are of no avail. It comes down to obedience of faith.

### **2Kgs 5:15-16 | Naaman Wants to Reward Elisha**

*15 When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now." 16 But he*

*said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing." And he urged him to take [it], but he refused.*

Without pomp and ceremony, Naaman returns to Elisha and stands in front of him. Naaman has changed completely. This can be seen in his attitude. No fewer than five times in verses 15-18 he speaks to Elisha about himself as "your servant". That is a huge change compared to the arrogant attitude he had at first. He has also changed in his confession. He confesses the God of Israel as the only God on earth. How much would Elisha have liked all the people of God to have confessed this from the heart! In any case, it did not occur to king Ahaziah to confess that (2Kgs 1:3,6,16).

Naaman would like to thank Elisha. He wants to give a gift to show his gratitude and to no longer buy his healing. This is due to a lack of knowledge. Elisha refuses that gift. He wants to avoid Naaman making a payment for his healing. Elisha has sometimes accepted gifts. A servant must learn to accept gifts, but he must also learn to refuse them. When preaching the gospel, it must be avoided.

### **2Kgs 5:17-19 | Naaman Returns Home**

*17 Naaman said, "If not, please let your servant at least be given two mules' load of earth; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD. 18 In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter." 19 He said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him some distance.*

Then Naaman asks for a favor. He wants to take some earth from God's land to his own country to offer the LORD sacrifices. By this he will also remember that he is one with the people of God, and in spirit together with them, worship the only God Who deserves worship.

We should not criticize Naaman's actions. Elisha doesn't do that either. We can see Naaman as a newly converted person, someone who has yet to grow in his faith. Much patience is needed at this time. He is not yet a mature believer. In addition, he also has obligations that he cannot shirk.

The fact that Naaman says all this in this way, testifies of a sensitive conscience. He experiences the tension between exclusive adherence to the God of Israel and what is expected of him in connection with his work. And that worries him. It was to be hoped that the conscience of Bethel visiting and Baal kissing Israelites would speak to them as it does to this heathen.

The LORD has not only cured Naaman from his leprosy, but also made him a faithful and God-fearing worshipper. He has literally “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1Thes 1:9). Not only has he lost his leprosy in the Jordan, but he has also lost his paganism there. This is evident from the change in his attitude and his confession.

Elisha’s reaction to what Naaman says, is not to give a sermon but let him go in peace, convinced that Naaman will do well. The LORD will lead him on. Thus the eunuch also goes his way in peace and joy after Philip has preached the gospel to him and has baptized him (Acts 8:39).

### **2Kgs 5:20-24 | The Greed of Gehazi**

*20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, “Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Aramean, by not receiving from his hands what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” 21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he came down from the chariot to meet him and said, “Is all well?” 22 He said, “All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Behold, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.’” 23 Naaman said, “Be pleased to take two talents.” And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried [them] before him. 24 When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.*

Gehazi is a picture of the state of Israel, as opposed to the heathen who received grace. The hatred that the Lord Jesus receives when He refers to the healing of Naaman, is not so much the fact of Naaman’s healing, as the fact that Naaman is healed apart from Israel (Lk 4:27-29). Grace shown to

unreligious people evokes the hatred of religious people who claim grace as a right.

There is a big difference between the converted pagan Naaman and the depraved Israelite Gehazi. Naaman has learned from Elisha that God is a God of grace. That is why Elisha refused his gifts. Elisha wanted Naaman to be impressed by the LORD, the God of Israel, as a God of grace. God cannot be bribed or manipulated with anything a person can give or do.

What Gehazi does must be seen in this light. By his behavior he makes the generous God, a questioning or even a demanding God. He is guided in his behavior by greed. Despite having experienced so much with the man of God, his heart has not changed. Under all the wonders of grace, his heart has remained cold. It is with him as with Judas. He is trapped by money.

When he sees that Elisha does not accept anything from Naaman, he is shocked. What a missed opportunity to become rich in what he considers to be a legal way! It cannot be true that Naaman departs with all his treasures, without leaving some of them. After all, Naaman has offered it. He devises a trick to get some of Naaman's wealth.

In the way he speaks about Naaman ("this Naaman the Aramean"), there is something of contempt. Lust for money is a terrible thing among the people of God. Whoever is caught in greed, is blind to the value of a person. In his boldness Gehazi even dares to link the name of the LORD to his greed. Using the words "the LORD lives" he takes the decision to run after Naaman.

As well as using the name of the LORD vainly (Exo 20:7), he also uses deceit. When he reaches Naaman, he makes up the story that the prophet has changed his mind. Elisha has been visited. In a single sentence, Gehazi destroys everything Elisha wanted to teach Naaman in verse 16. With what he says, Gehazi slanders Elisha, the man of God, as though he were still claiming a reward. The lie he uses also corrupts God's grace. He has a price tag on the grace of God. He presents God as a 'claimant', a God Who takes and is therefore no different from all the idols of the nations. This explains why his punishment is so severe.



Gehazi gets what he asks for and even more. Naaman gives him the enormous amount of two talent silver and also two changes of clothes. Cunningly, Gehazi has his wealth brought to a place where he can hide it himself. However, he does not take into account that he is dealing with Someone for Whom all things are naked and opened and Who has a prophet to whom He can communicate what He sees.

We can apply Gehazi's actions to much of what is happening in Christianity, i.e. the professing church, today. Paul speaks about this in his letter to the Galatians. There are people who claim that the death of the Lord Jesus is not enough to be saved. In their opinion, there is another thing that needs to be added, namely the keeping of certain requirements of the law, such as circumcision. The 'Jesus-Plus Movement' has found its entrance with the Galatians. But everything that is 'plus' obscures grace. This applies to the law, baptism, the tenets of the church. All we add to Christ as a condition of being a Christian and being accepted as such, is an obscuration of grace.

## 2Kgs 5:25-27 | Gehazi Is Discovered and Becomes Leprous

*25 But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." 26 Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go [with you], when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money and to receive clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants? 27 Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper [as white] as snow.*

When Gehazi is back with Elisha, he pretends that nothing has happened. He takes up his place again, ready to serve his lord. With his question, Elisha gives Gehazi the opportunity to confess his wickedness himself. He does not take this opportunity, but persists in the lie.

The man of God then says how he followed Gehazi in his heart, and saw in the spirit what happened when Gehazi reached Naaman. He has seen that Naaman welcomed Gehazi and gave him everything he asked for. Elisha does not speak about the literal gifts Naaman had given, but about what

Gehazi intended to buy with them all. He knew the unbridled greed of his servant.

This is how the Lord Jesus knew Judas' greed for money. Yet He has endured Judas, just as Elisha has endured Gehazi. He did not prevent Gehazi's actions, just as the Lord Jesus did not prevent Judas actions. God leaves man in his full responsibility.

Elisha asks if it was the right time to take all this stuff from Naaman. It was not the right time and because it was not the right time for it, Gehazi had stolen it. We must learn to look at the clock of God. Taking advantage of God's time is, for example, that we may want to have political influence or even government power, while we are not given that. Reigning with Christ is still coming (1Cor 4:8; 6:2-3).

We do not read that Elisha instructs Gehazi to return the money and goods to Naaman. He has taken the money from Naaman and he can keep it. But he also gets Naaman's leprosy.

## 2 Kings 6

### Introduction

Elisha is a man of God. This is reflected in each section of this chapter. He is the man of grace, although the aspect of judgment is not lacking. With Elijah, it was the other way round. This grace is not the result of a revolution in the people. It is a grace that God grants, when the condition of the people is dark. In this chapter and the following we see three examples of this.

### 2Kgs 6:1-3 | A New Place to Live

*1 Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "Behold now, the place before you where we are living is too limited for us. 2 Please let us go to the Jordan and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live." So he said, "Go." 3 Then one said, "Please be willing to go with your servants." And he answered, "I shall go."*

Here we meet again the student prophets whom we read about a few times in 2 Kings 2. They are united in schools dating back to the time of Samuel. Faithful men, whom we can see as a remnant among the people of God. They have learned lessons from 2 Kings 2. At first they did not have illuminated eyes, nor did they see Elijah's ascension, even though they do have knowledge of the fact that he was taken up to heaven. Meanwhile they have seen who Elisha is, how the spirit of Elijah rests on him, as they have seen some of his miracles.

Elisha is with them, possible to give them further education. They come to him with a wish. They want to build a new home, because a larger space is needed to live together. This will be due to an increase in the number of student prophets. The man of God is a point of attraction for those who want to know more about the LORD.

We can apply this to a local church. If there is a man of God in a place, there will be increase. In a man of God, the Lord Jesus becomes visible. Wherever He becomes visible, those who seek Him will also want to be

there. A man of God is not one above the local church, but is part of it. He is the power of the church. But if decisions are made, he will not make them as an individual. Decisions are taken by the entire church. Often a certain decision is made following his advice. He shows the way.

The student prophets propose to go to the Jordan. The Jordan is the river through which the Israelites had to pass to get into the promised land. For us, the Jordan is a picture of the death, the resurrection and the glorification of the Lord Jesus, through which we have entered the heavenly places, the heavenly land. God has “seated us with Him in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). That they propose to go to the Jordan can therefore be seen from a spiritual point of view as a proof of their spiritual growth. First they saw the Jordan from afar (2Kgs 2:7), they remained at a distance from it, but now they want to live there.

The proposal is that each of them gets a beam from the Jordan to build a new place to live together. They each have a personal share in the construction. They each make a contribution to the best of their ability. So it is with building God’s house. For its construction, the Lord has given each one of His own responsibilities. We all contribute to the construction of the church, each with his or her own gift. However, it is important to build with good materials.

If Elisha agrees to the request, the student prophets don’t immediately get on their way. They want Elisha to go with them. That is a good thing. Not only do they go on their way at his direction, but they also want to ensure his presence on that way. Elisha not only shows the way, but he also goes with them. The Spirit does the same with us. He indicates the way we should go and accompanies us on that way. We may walk, through the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Not only do we need the Lord to show us the right way, but we also need Him on the way itself.

## **2Kgs 6:4-7 | The Accident and the Miracle**

*4 So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. 5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, my master! For it was borrowed.” 6 Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And when he showed him the place, he cut off a*

*stick and threw [it] in there, and made the iron float. 7 He said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it.*

At the Jordan they go to work. While they are busy, an accident happens. When someone was cutting down a beam with an axe, the axe head fell into the water. He has lost control of his tools. Fortunately, the axe does not hit anyone (cf. Deu 19:5), but it does disappear into the water of the Jordan. The man has lost his tool. As he sees the iron disappear into the water, he cries out: "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed."

Elisha must have been close to him, because the man addressed his cry of fear to the man of God. That was the right call. Humanly we would say: 'What luck that they asked Elisha to come along.' Elisha inquired where the iron had fallen into the water. When the man has directed him to the place, Elisha cuts off a stick and throws it in to where the axe head fell. The stick functions as a magnet, because the iron is made to float. Elisha doesn't take the iron out of the water himself, but tells the man to take it up for himself. Elisha does the miracle, but the man must do what he can himself.

The story as such shows how much the man of God is involved in an apparently small event, but had become a personal drama for someone else. This history stands between two events that are of international magnitude. God's attention goes out to the big and the small. He has interactions with nations and with the individual.

The man's predicament is that he has lost something that was not his. He borrowed the axe, because he himself had none. We can perhaps deduce from the panic caused by his loss, that he had no money to buy one. The result of Elisha's intervention also points to this. The prophet did no miracles without reason. If there is a real need, then we can count on God's gracious and wonderful help.

Spiritually speaking, there is also something for us to learn. Here we see the Jordan as the river that, as it were, swallows up of a student prophet's tool, but also has to return it. When we think again of what the Jordan is a picture of – the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus – we learn that all our strength has been destroyed in the death of the Lord Jesus. We also

learn that we have risen to a new life and that we may work in the power of the Holy Spirit on God's house with the means He has for us.

The means we are given to serve the Lord are borrowed means. These are the gifts that have been made available to us. These gifts are no guarantee that the work will be done properly. We must learn that what we are and have, can only be properly used if we receive it from the hands of the man of God (the Lord Jesus) who retrieves it from the Jordan (the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus).

Moses is also a man of God who once threw a tree into the water. In that case it was to make undrinkable water drinkable, so that the people could drink it (Exo 15:25a). Elisha does the same for a few. In the wood we can see a picture of the cross of the Lord Jesus. Paul brings "the wood", the cross of Christ, into the church in Corinth (1Cor 2:1-5). Because the Corinthians misuse their gifts to their own glory, Paul reminds them of the foolishness of the cross. In the light of the cross the self-importance disappears and the Spirit is given the space to work what is to God's glory.

Man has to take up his tool himself. The house is being built now with a tool that came from the Jordan. The power of the stream is overcome by a piece of wood, so that what was hopelessly lost, is saved and can be made useful.

## **2Kgs 6:8-10 | Elisha Warns the King of Israel**

*8 Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." 9 The man of God sent [word] to the king of Israel saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there." 10 The king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice.*

God's Spirit tells us of the secret deliberations of the king of Aram, or Syria. The king may decide what he wants, but nothing is hidden from God. The Spirit communicated with Elisha what the king of Syria was up to. The man of God sent messengers to the king of Israel (possibly Jehoram) to warn him of the enemy's plans. He does not do it for Jehoram (cf. 2Kgs

3:13-14), but for the poor people and even more as a sign for the king of Syria. It is a sign of God's omnipotence to this king.

The man of God has a prophetic view. The king of Israel was very wise to listen to Elisha's advice. This was repeated several times. It also shows that no one can do any harm to God's people if their Protector does not allow it.

## 2Kgs 6:11-14 | Command to Capture Elisha

*11 Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?" 12 One of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." 13 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him." And it was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan." 14 He sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.*

The king of Aram, or Syria, was severely frustrated by the fact that his plans were always known. There is nothing more frustrating for a culprit than the fact that all his well thought-out plans are known to others and his intention fails time and time again. The king called his servants together and wanted to know who was betraying him. As it happens frequently, someone from the common people knows the answer. We are not told how he knew it; we are told only so much in this history without any explanatory information.

As the 'traitor' is now revealed, the king commands the arrest of Elisha. He has no doubt that with the arrest of Elisha he has indeed caught the culprit. He sent a huge army to Elisha. He had heard something of the power of this man and does not want to underestimate it. It shows how afraid the king was of the man of God. At the same time, he underestimated God's power by turning an army, a huge one, towards Elisha.

In the invisible world, the powers of darkness are also working in a joint effort to eliminate every believer who is a man of God's will. There are spiritual powers that are out to stop us in our work for the Lord. The devil does not under-estimate us. He is full of interest in us. He is not interested in slacking Christians, but in working Christians.

## 2Kgs 6:15-20 | Open and Closed Eyes

*15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 18 When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, "Strike this people with blindness, I pray." So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 19 Then Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city; follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he brought them to Samaria. 20 When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these [men], that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw; and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.*

The servant of Elisha was impressed by the power of the enemy. That's because he couldn't see well. He was scared because he didn't see the unseen. He looked only with his natural eyes and counted only with visible powers.

Elisha saw well. He did not need to pray for his own eyes to be opened. What we see with our eyes is no more reliable than what we see with the eyes of our heart. Thus the Lord Jesus saw many angels at His disposal when a multitude of people came to capture Him (Mt 26:53). Faith knows: "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them" (Psa 34:7). Jacob also saw a host of angels when he was on his way to meet Esau (Gen 32:1-2).

When Elisha prayed, the eyes of the servant were opened. The servant then saw what Elisha saw when Elijah went to heaven (2Kgs 2:11). The power of God who brought Elijah to heaven is at our disposal against the enemy. It is the power that lifts us above the earthly stage of threat and danger and brings us in the spirit within a place of complete security, inaccessible and therefore untouchable by the enemy.

When the enemies came towards him, Elisha prayed a new prayer, now not to open eyes, but to close eyes (cf. Gen 19:11). This was a physical



blindness, a literal blindness. The result of the Lord Jesus' service was spiritual blindness. He came to make spiritually blind people to see, and those who think they believe they see, to make blind. This is not a literal blindness, but a blindness of insight, of lacking understanding of their position.

The men walked after Elisha with open eyes, but blind to where they were. In this way he brought the enemy into the lion's den. This did not result in their destruction, but in a proof of unprecedented grace. When they were in the middle of Samaria, Elisha prayed again, now again to open their eyes. Then the enemies become aware of their position. They discovered the power of Elisha.

### 2Kgs 6:21-23 | Grace for Enemies

*21 Then the king of Israel when he saw them, said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" 22 He answered, "You shall not kill [them]. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." 23 So he prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel.*

Who also had open eyes was the king of Israel. Only he knew nothing of grace, proving that he was seeing blind. This is clear from his question to Elisha whether he would be allowed to kill these enemies. Elisha's answer was sober. He tells the king that he would not have killed them anyway if he had made them prisoners of war. Elisha did not even allow the king to simply send the prisoners back to their master. He ordered him to do good to his enemies by setting bread and water before them. The LORD first protected the king of Israel and Elisha against the king of Syria, and then He protected the Syrians against the king of Israel.

By this action, 'burning coals' are heaped on the head of the enemy (Rom 12:20; Pro 25:21-22). The word of the Lord Jesus is acted upon: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies" (Mt 5:43-44a). After the enemies are treated well, they were allowed to return to their master. The consequence

of the grace shown is that they (for the time being) did not return to the land of Israel to wage war against it.

### **2Kgs 6:24-30 | Famine in Samaria**

*24 Now it came about after this, that Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army and went up and besieged Samaria. 25 There was a great famine in Samaria; and behold, they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty [shekels] of silver, and a fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five [shekels] of silver. 26 As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!" 27 He said, "If the LORD does not help you, from where shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the wine press?" 28 And the king said to her, "What is the matter with you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' 29 So we boiled my son and ate him; and I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son." 30 When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes—now he was passing by on the wall—and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body.*

A proof of mercy can quickly be forgotten. We see that when the king of Aram, or Syria, takes up arms again, he went up against Samaria and besieged the city. The siege was long and caused a great famine. The enemy had forgotten that in this city he himself had received gracious treatment. A merciless siege takes place because he had forgotten what grace was bestowed upon him (Mt 18:21-35). It became the cause of yet another great proof of grace by the service of Elisha, but now for the people of God. It will be his last public service.

Food was becoming so scarce and hunger so great that an enormous price was asked for unclean food. Only the richest could buy something. Instead of taking refuge in the LORD with confession and repentance for their unfaithfulness, the LORD was blamed for the misery.

This is made clear when a woman cried to the king. There was no question of crying to God. The king was bitter and passed the blame onto the LORD. The LORD did not help and because of this he cannot help. The king did not realize that he owed his misery to himself. He asked the woman what

she wanted. It turns out that she wanted him to bring justice. It was a question that recalls the first law case of Solomon (1Kgs 3:16-28). However, the cause for the judiciary here was a much greater depravity. It showed the depth of misery caused by the unfaithfulness of the people.

While the rich could probably still buy something, the common man and woman, driven by enormous hunger, resorted to one of the greatest horrors one can imagine: eating their own children. All natural feelings had disappeared. Even the fruit of the womb was sacrificed to the selfishness of survival. Whoever is tempted into such acts need not be surprised if an agreement is not kept. Everything bore witness to the great degeneration of God's people. All norms and values had disappeared. This is the result of deviating from God (Lev 26:27-29; Deu 28:52-57; Col 2:20; 4:10).

When the king heard the woman's words, he tore his clothes. The garment of mourning that became visible was nothing more than outward appearance. Externally he was dressed in mourning, but there was no inner repentance. On the contrary, he was full of murderous design against the prophet of God.

## 2Kgs 6:31-33 | Elisha Gets the Blame

*31 Then he said, "May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today." 32 Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And [the king] sent a man from his presence; but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door shut against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" 33 While he was still talking with them, behold, the messenger came down to him and he said, "Behold, this evil is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?"*

The king sought a scapegoat and found it in Elisha. Just as Ahab attributed the misery to Elijah and thought he would get rid of it if he could kill Elijah, so did this king think he could put an end to the misery by killing Elisha. It was a foolish assumption that came from a hardened heart. By nature, we blame people who tell us we will be judged. Disasters in an end

time do not bring submission to God. They do not lead to conversion, but to slander of God (cf. Rev 16:10-11).

While hunger took such terrible forms and led to such terrible things, Elisha sat in his house. He undoubtedly shared in the famine. He suffered with the people of God. He had no hidden source of food. There were elders visiting him. They would be there to ask him for advice. It is always available when there is an emergency.

He was also aware of the death threat. He saw in his mind how Jehoram sent a murderer to him. He called him a "murderer's son", for Jehoram himself was the son of a murderer, Ahab. Elisha took measures in view of the imminent arrival of the messenger of the king, knowing that Jehoram would come right after him, to make sure that Elisha is indeed beheaded.

When the messenger had arrived at Elisha's door, the messenger spoke the language of his master. He again made a fierce reproach to the LORD. Elisha must die. He justified his unjust act by saying, as it were: 'If God does not take me into account and help me out of my worries, I will not take God into account.'

## 2 Kings 7

### **2Kgs 7:1-2 | Elisha Foretells Food and Judgment**

*1 Then Elisha said, "Listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be [sold] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'" 2 The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" Then he said, "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it."*

Elisha had an extraordinary word from the LORD. He looked death in the eyes, but talked about life about to come. This is not God's answer for conversion. It is God showing one of His proofs of grace without a reason or even a trace of repentance from His people.

The proof of grace brings to light that man is unrepentant. The royal officer mocked the power of God, Who in grace made this promise. It was the same language of the mocker who says: "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2Pet 3:4a). Only judgment can fall on this man, and it will come. Every mocker will be brought to the conviction of the truth of God's Word. But then it will be too late to repent.

### **2Kgs 7:3-4 | Four Leprous Men Confer**

*3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why do we sit here until we die? 4 If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we will live; and if they kill us, we will but die."*

Then our attention is directed at four leprous men at the entrance of the gate of the city. There is hardly a situation imaginable that is more hopeless than that of these four leprous men. They have participated in the same terrible famine, but have also been ejected from the city. They suffered with the people around them as well as suffering in their own body.

These men were different from Naaman, for they were members of God's people. The law of leprosy applies to them (Leviticus 13-14). Leprosy in a member of God's people, represents the bursting out of sin in this person. Therefore, the application here is not primarily about a sinner of the world who lives in his sins, but what a child of God falls into, when sin has the opportunity to manifest itself in him. Also the further lessons are different. With Naaman it is about cleaning his leprosy. In the four leprous men we see more the path to spiritual recovery.

They sat down, deliberated and considered the situation in all its realities. Death was around them and death was in them. They were completely without confidence of survival. They would starve in the city, and outside the city they would also die. Their only hope seemed to be the enemy's mercy for them. With this acknowledgement, their path of restoration begins.

### **2Kgs 7:5-8 | Abundance of Food and Wealth**

*5 They arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Arameans; when they came to the outskirts of the camp of the Arameans, behold, there was no one there. 6 For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, [even] the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us." 7 Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, [even] the camp just as it was, and fled for their life. 8 When these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, and carried from there silver and gold and clothes, and went and hid [them]; and they returned and entered another tent and carried from there [also], and went and hid [them].*

The lepers went to the Syrian army camp to surrender to them. This means that they were ready to surrender to the rod of discipline in God's hand for His people, for that is what the Syrians were. The men thereby accepted the judgment. The path of spiritual restoration begins when we acknowledge that God is chastising us and accepting it from His hand. Then there is return to life (Heb 12:4-11).

When they arrived at the camp, they saw that there was no one there. That was the result of the LORD's work. He made the Syrians hear a tremendous noise, revealing His power as He did when He took Elijah to heaven (2Kgs 2:11), and when He surrounded Elisha in Dothan (2Kgs 6:17). The Syrians misinterpreted this, because they do not acknowledge God, thinking that it can only come from natural means.

This demonstration of power contributes to the restoration of the lepers. God alone has driven out the enemy, without anyone having helped Him. So every restoration is God's work alone. It is also restoration that brought great blessings. The leprous men were overloaded with blessings, blessings that were thrown into their laps. At this time they only thought of themselves. There was food, silver and gold and clothes. They experienced what the prodigal son did when he was back with his father (Lk 15:21-23). When someone has just come to the knowledge of being saved, he is happy for himself with everything he has received.

### **2Kgs 7:9-11 | Good News Must Be Told**

*9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; if we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household." 10 So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and they told them, saying, "We came to the camp of the Arameans, and behold, there was no one there, nor the voice of man, only the horses tied and the donkeys tied, and the tents just as they were." 11 The gatekeepers called and told [it] within the king's household.*

After being so absorbed in their blessings, they came to reflect that it was a day of good news. They must not keep the salvation they have received for themselves. If we really appreciate the spiritual riches we have received as believers, we will distribute them. Not only is it important to spread the gospel to unbelievers, but it is also important to share "the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19) with spiritually poor believers.

The men talked about the morning light coming. If they kept everything to themselves, their guilt would be discovered. We see here a picture of the "morning light" of the judgment seat of Christ, where everything will be

revealed (2Cor 5:10). When He sits on the judgment seat and we appear before Him there, Christ will make clear what we have done with what we have received. Will He, or will believers, have to reproach us for having kept all riches to ourselves?

The men applied the action to the word and went to town. The king and the people must know what they had discovered. At that moment, the people in the city were sleeping with hungry stomachs. They had gone to bed with the only thought that they would be even more miserable the next day.

The four men went with the good news to the gatekeepers. They couldn't do anything else; it was impossible for them to remain silent about these things, just as it was impossible for the apostles not to speak of Christ later on (Acts 4:20). The love of Christ controls them (cf. 2Cor 5:14a). The gatekeeper told the story of the four lepers in the royal palace. The good news was passed on, higher and higher up to the king.

## **2Kgs 7:12-15 | Reaction to the Good News**

*12 Then the king arose in the night and said to his servants, "I will now tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone from the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we will capture them alive and get into the city.'" 13 One of his servants said, "Please, let some [men] take five of the horses which remain, which are left in the city. Behold, they [will be in any case] like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it; behold, they [will be in any case] like all the multitude of Israel who have already perished, so let us send and see." 14 They took therefore two chariots with horses, and the king sent after the army of the Arameans, saying, "Go and see." 15 They went after them to the Jordan, and behold, all the way was full of clothes and equipment which the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. Then the messengers returned and told the king.*

The message was not immediately believed. There was suspicion. That resulted in an extension of the misery. We too do not have to count on an enthusiastic reception of the gospel. The king showed false mistrust. The prophet had promised him salvation, but he could only think of an am-



bush. Salvation was too easy for him. Thus when faith is preached as the only means of salvation, it is often disregarded. Faith means that one does not have to do anything to be saved. However, people always want to do something. In this case everything had already been done. The king only had to go outside and receive.

This king had good servants. One made a proposal to help the king cross the threshold of his mistrust, just like a servant helped Naaman get over his pride earlier. Simple people are often the deciding factor for an important decision and not lofty rhetoric. God uses whom He will for the performance of His work. In this story these are four impure members of His people and a nameless servant of the king. He chooses the base and the insignificant (1Cor 1:25-28).

The proposal was executed. The king sent men to investigate. The few horses that were still there were used. After all, it made no difference to anything. Everyone needed to wait until the messengers would come back.

The messengers went on their way, following the trail of the Syrians who had fled to the Jordan. It was not difficult to follow them, because the whole road was "full of clothes and equipment which the Arameans had thrown away in their haste". Everything was there just to be picked up. The messengers returned and reported what they had seen.

It is spiritually significant that it is mentioned that the messengers followed the enemies "to the Jordan", and that all the enemies' belongings were scattered up to that place. It is a picture that the judgment of God has gone to the Jordan and the blessings to the Jordan lie before us. The victory and the blessing are connected with the Jordan.

In the Jordan Naaman was cleansed, in the Jordan a student prophet got his axe head back. It is proposed, that through the death and resurrection of Christ, cleansing of sins is obtained (Naaman) and the ability to build (the student prophet). Also this means the end of the enemy and the beginning of blessing. Israel only had to accept it. For us, every victory over our state of sin is achieved by the Lord Jesus on the cross. That is where restoration came about. The messengers testify of this to the king.

## **2Kgs 7:16-20 | The Word of the LORD Fulfilled**

*16 So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of fine flour [was sold] for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. 17 Now the king appointed the royal officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; but the people trampled on him at the gate, and he died just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. 18 It happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, will be [sold] tomorrow about this time at the gate of Samaria." 19 Then the royal officer answered the man of God and said, "Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he said, "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it." 20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled on him at the gate and he died.*

After the message of the enemy's run, the people flew out of town to take the spoil. The word which the LORD had spoken in verse 1 was fulfilled. The following verses are also a fulfillment of what was announced earlier. The people could fully satisfy their hunger. However, we do not read a word of gratitude to the LORD and Elisha, as we saw in Naaman. Do we thank the Lord for our salvation? We should start with that every day and not just enjoy the consequences as if all this were self-evident.

The royal officer on whom the king leaned, came to his end, as Elisha said; a terrible fulfillment for him according to God's word. The king charged him to supervise at the gate. The man was standing in the gate, seeing everything the people were going to enjoy, but he was not given a part in it. Thus the Lord Jesus spoke of people who see others in the bosom of Abraham, but are cast out themselves. There is a seeing that is abhorrent, like the man in the realm of the dead when he sees Lazarus in the distance (Lk 16:23).

Because this event is intended to make a deep impression on us, these verses refer in detail to the reason for the judgment. Almost literally, we are told again what is written at the beginning of this chapter about what Elisha has said and the reaction of the royal officer. In this section it is told twice. In total, the new price of food is stated three times, also that the of-

ficer dies as the man of God has spoken and all was fulfilled according to the word the LORD..

God's judgment is thus doubly underlined, as it were. Again and again this section refers to what the LORD has said and points out that His Word is actually and literally fulfilled. God forgets nothing of what mockers have said. They are reminded of it. It all happened, as it was said. The man has no excuse, because God maintains His Word.

This royal officer is a penetrating, warning example for young people growing up in an environment where, from an early age, they are acquainted with the truth and promises of God. Young people can see a lot of the glorious truths of God's Word and yet stay outside of it, because there is no faith, yes, they can even be mockers. They have been enlightened, but end in eternal darkness (cf. Heb 6:4-6). They have been so close to it, they have tasted everything, but never had an inner part in it through faith. They 'see', that is, they know of the virgin birth, but do not believe. They know about the cross and the resurrection, but they do not believe it. The warning is: "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking" (Heb 12:25a).

## 2 Kings 8

### **2Kgs 8:1-6 | The Shunammite Gets Back Her Field**

*1 Now Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go with your household, and sojourn wherever you can sojourn; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will even come on the land for seven years." 2 So the woman arose and did according to the word of the man of God, and she went with her household and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3 At the end of seven years, the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went out to appeal to the king for her house and for her field. 4 Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Please relate to me all the great things that Elisha has done." 5 As he was relating to the king how he had restored to life the one who was dead, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and for her field. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life." 6 When the king asked the woman, she related [it] to him. So the king appointed for her a certain officer, saying, "Restore all that was hers and all the produce of the field from the day that she left the land even until now."*

In this history we have a striking picture of the fates of the people of Israel in the future. In Gehazi, the leprous servant of Elisha, we can see a picture of Israel in unbelief. The woman is a picture of the faithful remnant that has been among the nations for a full period, "seven years".

Elisha received a word from the LORD about the famine. Elisha did not bring the famine, as Elijah had done (1Kgs 17:1). Elijah therefore was the man of judgment, while Elisha announced the famine and showed mercy to the woman by warning her of it. Elisha not only used his power, which was God's, but also the knowledge he had received from God for future events, in grace for the benefit of others.

As a prophet of grace, Elisha had a place of refuge for a woman. She was happy among her people, but must leave that place at once. That must not have been easy. This was how Israel has been wandering among the

nations for two thousand years. The famine is no longer that of a particular place, Samaria (2Kgs 6:24-25; 7:3-4a), but of the whole world.

The woman left the country at the word of Elisha. She obediently complied with what had been told her. By leaving the country, she bowed under judgment. Elimelech also left the country because of a famine (Rth 1:1), but he did so without the order of the LORD. He wanted to escape the discipline of God. One time God's people must resist the enemy, the next time they must go to the enemy (cf. Jer 27:11-17). Each time only the word of the LORD is paramount. It is about obeying.

The woman returned when the famine was over. It is not said that she received a message about it. She will have kept track of the time. She could return after seven years. That was what she did. When she was back in the land, she went to the king. It seems that after her departure her property had fallen to the king. He could therefore give it back. She did have to ask for it, because she left of her own accord. What kind of right could she assert?

The moment she came before the king, the king was in conversation with Gehazi. He asked Gehazi to tell him about the miracles Elisha had performed. Perhaps he was like Ahasuerus who, out of boredom, had someone read to him (Est 6:1), or as Felix who, in search of financial gain, wanted to hear Paul regularly (Acts 24:26). God used both for His plan with His own. To this end, He uses everyday things He controls, in the way only He can. How Gehazi came to the court is not known. The fact is, he was there.

Gehazi seemed to be someone who knew a lot about Elisha's religion and the things he had done. He told about it, but only as someone who knows about it superficially, while he has no inner share in it. The matters he could tell a lot about are beyond his ken. Thus are the words of God given to the Jews; they have handed them over to us (Rom 3:1-2) without being converted.

There are many people who can explain the gospel without it impacting on themselves. It must be clear to anyone who is working on it or hears that they share in it. It makes no sense, for example, to be concerned with the question of whether people can be saved having never heard of the Lord Jesus, without first dealing with this question for one's own soul.

It seems coincidental that at this very moment the woman appeared before the king. Of course God governs everything, but from our point of view it seems a coincidence (cf. Rth 2:3). Everything the woman had left is again restored to her. She was maintained abroad, but she was also paid for all the produce of the field from the day that she left the land till her return.

The woman is given back everything, by grace, but also because Gehazi had just told about her dead son who had been raised to life. Thus we have received everything by virtue of the resurrection of the Son Who was dead, but Who has become alive again. So will it be with Israel when it is restored to the land, when the people see that their children are more numerous than they ever thought (Isa 54:1-3). That is because of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Son of God, as described in the previous chapter, Isaiah 53.

### **2Kgs 8:7-15 | Hazael King of Aram**

*7 Then Elisha came to Damascus. Now Ben-hadad king of Aram was sick, and it was told him, saying, "The man of God has come here." 8 The king said to Hazael, "Take a gift in your hand and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'" 9 So Hazael went to meet him and took a gift in his hand, even every kind of good thing of Damascus, forty camels' loads; and he came and stood before him and said, "Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'" 10 Then Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You will surely recover,' but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die." 11 He fixed his gaze steadily [on him] until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. 12 Hazael said, "Why does my lord weep?" Then he answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword, and their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their women with child you will rip up." 13 Then Hazael said, "But what is your servant, [who is but] a dog, that he should do this great thing?" And Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Aram." 14 So he departed from Elisha and returned to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me that you would surely recover." 15 On the following day, he took*

*the cover and dipped it in water and spread it on his face, so that he died. And Hazael became king in his place.*

Elisha stayed in the background, his service being almost over. Yet he still had something to do, namely, to anoint Hazael. He had to do so instead of Elijah to whom the commission was given (1Kgs 19:15). That this had not yet happened is a proof of God's grace which gives people a longer time to come to conversion. But then came the time of the anointing of Hazael, as the LORD had said to Elijah. Here the rod of God's discipline was prepared by Him, for His grace was not accepted by His people. For that, Elisha went to Damascus. At that moment, the king of Aram, or Syria, was sick.

God used Ben-hadad's sickness to bring Elisha into contact with Hazael. Ben-hadad wanted to know if he would recover. He saw Elisha as a medium, willing to do a favorable conjuration for money. Maybe he had heard of the healing of Naaman. He sent Hazael, his servant, with a gift to Elisha to ask him about the outcome of his sickness. It was a huge gift. We see that when we compare this gift with the gift Naaman brought (2Kgs 5:5).

In his question Ben-hadad addressed Elisha as a father, by addressing him as "your son". Elisha had a double answer. On the one hand, he would recover from his sickness, because his sickness was not lethal. On the other hand he would die, but then by the hand of Hazael, his murderer. Healing is a word *to* Ben-hadad, his death is a word *about* him.

When Elisha sees it before by his spiritual eyes, he cannot hold back and bursts into tears. He sees the consequences of what Hazael will do. He wept because his service had been in vain, and the people will come to judgment. That is ultimately the experience of every servant of the Lord. The situation has deteriorated despite his service. So it was with the apostles and the reformers and the men of the revival. It is still the case. This does not make service attractive. At the end of service, the judgment remains.

Do we know what will happen to the world, what will cause evil people to suffer, what evil false teachers will cause in Christianity, i.e. the professing church, what spiritual suffering and spiritual death antichrists will cause? What does that do us, does it bring us to weep like Elisha?

Hazael pretended not to know what it was all about. He presented himself as someone unable to do anything like that. But inwardly his plan was brewing. Then Elisha said Hazael would become king. The fact that God had determined that he would become king did not change his responsibility. Just like Jeroboam, who had also been told that he would become king, he took the law into his own hands when that moment came.

When Hazael reported to Ben-hadad, he only told half the story Elisha had told him. He told Ben-hadad that his sickness would not end up in death. Hazael did not tell the other half of the story, but fulfilled this part. He killed his king and became king in his stead.

## **2Kgs 8:16-24 | Jehoram King of Judah**

*16 Now in the fifth year of Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then the king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab became his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 19 However, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always. 20 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. 21 Then Jehoram crossed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him. And he arose by night and struck the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots; but [his] army fled to their tents. 22 So Edom revolted against Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time. 23 The rest of the acts of Jehoram and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 24 So Jehoram slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.*

There is now a break in the history of the kings of Israel to mention the history of some kings of Judah. This is because these kings were in contact with Israel's kings. It began with Jehoram, the son of the God-fearing Jehoshaphat, who married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She had an extraordinarily bad influence on him. She was like her parents and



made him walk “in the way of the kings of Israel”, a way that is evil in the sight of the LORD. The details we read in 2 Chronicles 21.

By this marriage, the wickedness of the house of Ahab penetrated into Judah, into David’s lineage. Yet God’s grace was still over Judah. He remained faithful to His word for His servant David (2Sam 7:12-16; 21:17). For his sake, the LORD did not destroy Judah, even though they deserved to be.

However, God did apply a form of discipline to them. We see it in the revolt of Edom. Whoever departs from God will face all kinds of setbacks. By this God wants to bring back to Him those who depart from Him.

In what seems like an aside, the uprising of Libnah is also mentioned. Libnah is a priest city. It may have revolted because the priests were unwilling or unable to participate in the nation’s prevalent idolatry. That was also a warning voice, a protest, against the deviations, intended to bring about a return to the LORD.

## 2Kgs 8:25-29 | Ahaziah King of Judah

*25 In the twelfth year of Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. 26 Ahaziah [was] twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name [was] Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. 27 He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab [had done], because he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab. 28 Then he went with Jehoram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, and the Arameans wounded Jehoram. 29 So King Jehoram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel because he was sick.*

Jehoram is succeeded by his son Ahaziah. The time when Ahaziah began to rule is linked to the reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab. This man went totally in the way of the house of Ahab, for his mother was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (verse 18). Here it says that she was “the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel” (verse 26). She walked in the spirit of this wicked

man Omri, as did her father Ahab, Omri's son. This whole godless influence was also strengthened by her mother Jezebel's demonic upbringing.

In verses 28-29 the Holy Spirit prepares the stage for the events described in 2 Kings 9-10. He led the ways of these wicked people and prepared them to receive judgment.

## 2 Kings 9

### **Introduction**

We have come to a turning point in the history of the Israel's northern kingdom. The house of Ahab was about to be exterminated. To this end God called Jehu for a special calling. It is said three times of Jehu that he was anointed king by the LORD (verses 3,6,12). He was the only one of all the kings of the ten tribes of whom that is said. Not one of the other kings was anointed. His anointing was therefore unique and means that he was called to a special task.

At the same time we see that, although God calls someone, He does not approve of everything that person does. God can also use unbelievers and even Satan. In this history we learn how the hand of God is in these things. He leads history, He chooses His instruments and executes judgment through them. Perhaps we can compare Jehu with Nebuchadnezzar who was also an instrument of God and at the same time acted willfully. Another question is, to what extent was the anointed Jehu guided by the LORD, which kind of instrument was he? Was he a believer?

We see the evaluation of all Jehu's actions in Hosea 1 (Hos 1:4). There is talk about blood debt on the *house* of Jehu, in which the three following generations were included. But it started with Jehu. He shed the blood of many people without the order from God.

Why does God call such a man? Because Jehu was the least bad of all the bad guys. He knew and hated the idolatry of Jezebel. He was very energetic. But whoever has a commission from the LORD has no license to do what he wills. For the execution one has to depend on Him step by step. The energy of Jehu was not that of faith, but of the flesh. One may have a command from the Lord, but yet not always be in dependence on the Lord. This was the case with Jehu.

In the history of the church on earth, which we see presented in the seven churches of Revelation 2-3, we meet Jehu in the phase of Sardis. Sardis follows Thyatira as Jehu follows Jezebel. We see great similarities between

Jehu and Sardis. The Lord told Sardis that she has a name that she is alive, but she is dead (Rev 3:1). The expressions of life are seen, but it is only a semblance of life. Also, her works were not found to be perfect (Rev 3:2). This did not mean that something was missing, but quite the opposite, more was done than had been required. Too much had been done and that is a sin. That is how it was with the emerging Protestantism. Protestantism has dealt with the idolatry of Rome. There is much that is of God. That is the reformation. But there is also a lot of the flesh and that is protestantism.

An example of the combination of man's responsibility in a negative sense and God's actions, can be seen in the judgment of Ahaziah. In 2 Chronicles 22 we read about the downfall of Ahaziah as a decree by the LORD (2Chr 22:7-9). There the death of Ahaziah is seen from the side of God. Jehu did not receive the instruction to kill Ahaziah the king of Judah. With that he did more than he should. But that does not mean that God had lost control. It is the problem of the relationship between man's responsibility and God's hand. Ahaziah was killed because he had sinned against God. What God uses from the actions of man does not absolve man from the responsibility of his actions.

### **2Kgs 9:1-4 | Command to Anoint Jehu King Over Israel**

*1 Now Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, "Gird up your loins, and take this flask of oil in your hand and go to Ramoth-gilead. 2 When you arrive there, search out Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and bid him arise from among his brothers, and bring him to an inner room. 3 Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, "Thus says the LORD, "I have anointed you king over Israel."" Then open the door and flee and do not wait." 4 So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.*

Why did Elisha send a student prophet? Did he have to anoint Hazael himself? What did Elijah do before? Elisha did to Hazael what Elijah was told to do. Here we see that just like Elijah, Elisha followed with regard to Hazael; he passed on the command, putting it in the hands of one of the student prophets.

He told the student prophet to gird up his loins. This indicates that he was to walk fast to fulfill his mission quickly. Jehu must be anointed with oil from flask. That reminds us of Saul who was also anointed with oil from a flask (1Sam 10:1), while David was anointed with oil from a horn (1Sam 16:1). A flask represents fragility and a horn strength. Saul and Jehu failed in their task; David served the purpose of God (Acts 13:36).

The anointing must take place behind closed doors (verse 2). It is not a public matter, but private. In this we can see an indication of God, determining behind the scenes, who comes to power. This also applies to all governments. By Him “kings reign” and “princes rule” (Pro 8:15,16).

### 2Kgs 9:5-10 | Anointing of and Command for Jehu

*5 When he came, behold, the captains of the army were sitting, and he said, “I have a word for you, O captain.” And Jehu said, “For which [one] of us?” And he said, “For you, O captain.” 6 He arose and went into the house, and he poured the oil on his head and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, [even] over Israel. 7 You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male person both bond and free in Israel. 9 I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10 The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and none shall bury [her].’” Then he opened the door and fled.*

The student prophet came to Jehu. It seems that Jehu was somewhere on a field, in consultation with fellow captains of the army. He was one of the captains. The student prophet said he had a message, “for you, O captain”. He did not mention a name, but Jehu responded to the remark; he is the leader. The student prophet may have looked at him or even pointed to him.

When Jehu asked who he meant, the student prophet answered with the same word, “for you, O captain”. Jehu stood up and went into the house. There he is anointed by the student prophet. The words with which the anointing occurred bear witness to the profound significance associated

with the anointing. Being king “over the people of the LORD” is a serious matter. This must penetrate deeply. God does not give up His claims on His people. This is also evident from the command Jehu received.

The LORD had not forgotten His people: for Jehu was to deliver his people from idolaters and idols. That should have told Jehu a lot. He needed to bring judgment on Ahab and his house (verses 7-10). This was the command made by Elijah (1Kgs 21:21-24).

After the anointing with the accompanying words the student prophet fled. Why this fleeing? Elisha knew Jehu’s character, as he also knew Hazael’s. It seems that he ordered the young man not to stay with Jehu any longer than was necessary for the anointing. He needed act as the man of God from Judah (1Kgs 13:7-10,16-17). Jehu was not good company for this student prophet. This is very different from the anointing of David. Samuel did not flee when he had anointed the anointed of the LORD. David was therefore the man after God’s heart.

### **2Kgs 9:11-13 | Jehu Proclaimed King**

*11 Now Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and one said to him, “Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you?” And he said to them, “You know [very well] the man and his talk.” 12 They said, “It is a lie, tell us now.” And he said, “Thus and thus he said to me, ‘Thus says the LORD, “I have anointed you king over Israel.”’” 13 Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it under him on the bare steps, and blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”*

The company Jehu was in did not excel in Godliness. They called the messenger of Elisha, the man of God, who came to Jehu with a message from God, “this mad fellow”. These scornful men were Jehu’s friends. Later Jehu himself behaved in such a way that of him is said what is said here of the prophet (verses 11,20).

Jehu did not respect the messenger either. In his reply, he joined in with their ridicule. He even called the man one who only talks, by which he probably meant empty or negative talk. With those words Jehu wanted to finish the subject. His comrades insisted, however, because they didn’t like his answer. They may have mentioned that the man as one who only

talks, but they also knew that he didn't just come for no reason. He would certainly have brought an important message.

When Jehu told them what the man had said and done, they suddenly changed their minds. Although they did not judge the student prophet differently, the message of that 'talker' was agreeable to them. They did not accept the word because they agreed with God's Word, but because the message was convenient for them. For them, Jehu was the king they wanted immediately. They all took off their garments and placed it under him. Then they announced that Jehu had become king.

## 2Kgs 9:14-26 | Jehu Kills Jehoram

14 So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Jehoram. Now Jehoram with all Israel was defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram, 15 but King Jehoram had returned to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Aram. So Jehu said, "If this is your mind, [then] let no one escape [or] leave the city to go tell [it] in Jezreel." 16 Then Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Jehoram was lying there. Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Jehoram. 17 Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, "I see a company." And Jehoram said, "Take a horseman and send him to meet them and let him say, 'Is it peace?'" 18 So a horseman went to meet him and said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'" And Jehu said, "What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me." And the watchman reported, "The messenger came to them, but he did not return." 19 Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'" And Jehu answered, "What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me." 20 The watchman reported, "He came even to them, and he did not return; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously." 21 Then Jehoram said, "Get ready." And they made his chariot ready. Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu and found him in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22 When Jehoram saw Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" And he answered, "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" 23 So Jehoram reined about and fled and said to Ahaziah, "[There is] treachery, O

*Ahaziah!" 24 And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Jehoram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart and he sank in his chariot. 25 Then [Jehu] said to Bidkar his officer, "Take [him] up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite, for I remember when you and I were riding together after Ahab his father, that the LORD laid this oracle against him: 26 'Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the LORD, 'and I will repay you in this property,' says the LORD. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the LORD."*

Jehu did not oppose his appointment. He accepted the kingship his friends have chosen for him. He also immediately had his plan ready and together with the other captains he conspired against Jehoram, the king of Israel. By doing so, he made them jointly responsible for his actions. He didn't only go because the LORD has said it, but also provided himself with the support of others. There was no request whatsoever to the LORD, for what He had chosen for him to do. He did ask if, if the captains really want him to be king, they would show it by making sure that his plan did not become known in Jezreel ahead of time.

In an in-between sentence (verses 14b-15a) it is still told that the wicked king Jehoram of Israel was in Jezreel and that he was there to be healed of the wounds he suffered in the war against the Syrians. That explains why Jehu wanted to go to Jezreel, because there is the man he wanted to kill first. Also Ahaziah king of Judah was there on a visit to his uncle Jehoram, who is on his sickbed.

The watchman on the watchtower of Jezreel saw the company of Jehu arriving and reported it in the city. Jehoram sent out a horseman to ask if they came in peace. He may have been referring to peace with the Syrians. Jehoram does not think that Jehu was on his way to kill him. When the horseman arrived and asked the king's question for peace, Jehu answered by how the man could be thinking to ask such a question. Did he not see that there is no peace in the kingdom as long as it is ruled by such a king? The man had better join him. That was what the messenger did. The second messenger sent by Jehoram did the same.



The watchman told Jehoram of both the first and the second messengers that they greeted the company of Jehu, but did not return. Meanwhile, the company had also come closer. Now the watchman could see from the style of driving that it was Jehu. Jehu drove furiously.

The question might arise whether it is wrong to carry out a command as quickly and well as possible. Yet that is not what this is all about. With all we know about Jehu, it seems that his sole purpose in driving fast was to become king as fast as possible. Didn't he have a wonderful reason in what the prophet had said? Isn't it wonderful to be able to carry out God's judgment? Jehu loved to do that, but it was a carnal pleasure for him.

This is how it can be when disciplining in the church. Discipline is necessary when people sin openly and it is not confessed. However, if this discipline is carried out with an unseen pleasure, for example because it evicts someone who obstructed our plans, the motive is purely carnal, we act in self-interest. We must always be aware that it is about the Name of the Lord. Otherwise we act in the power of the flesh, as Jehu does.

When Jehoram heard that the second rider had not returned, he and Ahaziah go to meet Jehu. Not long after, there were three kings together in Jezreel. They are drawn together as by a magnet and that even on Naboth's land. Jehoram himself then asked the question he had asked through both horsemen, the question of peace with the Syrians. In his answer Jehu did not talk about peace with the Syrians, but about the lack of peace among God's people.

He also talked about the cause of the lack of that peace. The cause lay in the harlotries, the witchcrafts of Jehoram's mother Jezebel. The diagnosis was correct. How could there be peace among God's people, as long as the disgusting and demonic influence of Jezebel was present and maintained? At the same time, the observation was businesslike. Nothing of the indignation of the prophets who share in the feelings of God's heart's sorrow could be heard.

When Jehoram discovered that Jehu was not an ally, but an opponent, he shouted "treachery" to Ahaziah and fled. But Jehu was prepared for that. He drew his bow with his full strength and killed the fleeing Jehoram with one well-targeted arrow. The force with which the arrow is shot is empha-

sized. It reflected the inner attitude of Jehu. He must and will perform his task without failure. He knew intellectually that he was engaged in carrying out the judgment announced by God through Elijah (1Kgs 21:19-24).

We even hear from what Jehu quoted, of a peculiarity that we don't read in 1 Kings 21. It appears that Naboth's sons were also murdered by Jezebel and Ahab in order to take possession of their piece of land and to keep it. Jezebel and Ahab would have argued that by also killing the sons, no one would be able to claim Naboth's land.

### **2Kgs 9:27-29 | Jehu Kills Ahaziah**

*27 When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw [this], he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu pursued him and said, "Shoot him too, in the chariot." [So they shot him] at the ascent of Gur, which is at Ibleam. But he fled to Megiddo and died there. 28 Then his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem and buried him in his grave with his fathers in the city of David. 29 Now in the eleventh year of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah.*

When Ahaziah fled, Jehu ordered him to be killed. The actual death of Ahaziah took place some time later, because he fled to Megiddo. He was killed in the district of Samaria, not in the city of Samaria. Ahaziah was the son of the godless king Jehoram of Judah, and Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. Instead of distancing himself from Ahab's wicked house, he sought after its friendship. Because of this he shared in the judgment that came upon the house of Ahab.

### **2Kgs 9:30-37 | Jehu Kills Jezebel**

*30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard [of it], and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window. 31 As Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?" 32 Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officials looked down at him. 33 He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot. 34 When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." 35 They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and*

*the feet and the palms of her hands. 36 Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; 37 and the corpse of Jezebel will be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, "This is Jezebel."'"*

After Jehu killed Jehoram, he came into Samaria. There was Jezebel and to Jehu it was especially about her. When Jezebel heard that Jehu was coming, she dressed up, painting her eyes and adorning of her hair. Did she want to try to impress Jehu with her beauty? She must have known that her life was over. But instead of worrying about her soul, she was concerned about her body. That is also very much present today. It is dangerous to do a lot of physical care and neglect the care of the soul.

When she saw Jehu, she also spoke to him about peace. It was not a question of whether there was still peace to be made. It was more a statement that, as far as she was concerned, there was no peace for Jehu. She spoke to him as "Zimri, your master's murderer". The meaning seems to be as follows. Zimri became king by murder. However, he was king for only seven days, for after seven days of kingship, when he was cornered, he ended his life by suicide (1Kgs 16:8-10,15-18). By naming Jehu Zimri, she said that things would not be better for him than for Zimri. She expected he would only reign for a short time. She held on to her own position.

Jehu did not answer nor address her. He spoke to her officials and asked who was with him. His question was not who is on the LORD's side, but who is on his side. He didn't honor the Name of the LORD, but gathered people around himself. It should not be important to us who is on our side, but who is on the Lord's side. It is not about who is with us (cf. Mk 9:38), but who is with the Lord.

Jehu ordered for her to be thrown out of the window. Then he trampled her under foot. His actions were extremely despicable. This went beyond hating evil. The way he judged her goes beyond what is appropriate. He was stricter than God. That he was totally insensitive is shown by the fact that after having trampled Jezebel like this, he went inside to eat and drink.

Then he seemed to weaken and ordered to give a funeral to "this cursed woman" because she was a king's daughter. However, God did not speak

of a burial. The men he sent out to bury her, came back with the announcement that there was nothing left of Jezebel except for a few bones. She had been eaten by the dogs. Suddenly Jehu remembered again what Elijah had said. However, he did not allow himself to be corrected by it; it was more a conclusion. Her memory must simply disappear from Israel, she must not be remembered in any way.

## 2 Kings 10

### Introduction

In this chapter we see several sides of Jehu. On the one hand he goes too far by killing people whom God has not instructed him to kill, and on the other, he did not go far enough. He eradicated the Baal worship, but not the golden calves, which he continued to serve. He often did the work of God, but actually pursued his own interests. It seems that he was more of an instrument than a servant. He knew how to handle the sword excellently when it came to judging evil. What he had not learned, however, was to apply the sword, applied in a spiritual sense, to himself.

He was a useful instrument as long as God's interests corresponded to his own. If God's interests were not in line with his own interests, he went his own way.

### 2Kgs 10:1-11 | Ahab's Offspring Killed

*1 Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters and sent [them] to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, the elders, and to the guardians of [the children of] Ahab, saying, 2 "Now, when this letter comes to you, since your master's sons are with you, as well as the chariots and horses and a fortified city and the weapons, 3 select the best and fittest of your master's sons, and set [him] on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house." 4 But they feared greatly and said, "Behold, the two kings did not stand before him; how then can we stand?" 5 And the one who [was] over the household, and he who [was] over the city, the elders, and the guardians of [the children], sent [word] to Jehu, saying, "We are your servants, all that you say to us we will do, we will not make any man king; do what is good in your sight." 6 Then he wrote a letter to them a second time saying, "If you are on my side, and you will listen to my voice, take the heads of the men, your master's sons, and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow about this time." Now the king's sons, seventy persons, [were] with the great men of the city, [who] were rearing them. 7 When the letter came to them, they took the king's sons and slaughtered [them], sev-*

enty persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent [them] to him at Jezreel. 8 When the messenger came and told him, saying, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons," he said, "Put them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning." 9 Now in the morning he went out and stood and said to all the people, "You are innocent; behold, I conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these? 10 Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what He spoke through His servant Elijah." 11 So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests, until he left him without a survivor.

The events followed each other in quick succession. Jehu acted energetically. After Jezreel, he also wanted Samaria on his side. Seventy sons of Ahab lived in Samaria. This meant all his male offspring which he had conceived with his many wives, and also his grandsons. All these sons were a danger to Jehu's kingdom. It was therefore imperative for them to be eliminated. He devised a clever plan for this. He sent letters to Samaria, to the city council. The content of his letter was very challenging, there was bravado in it. It was the language of a confident man who knows his own power and also knows the weak spot of his opponent.

He spoke to them as people who still saw Ahab as their "lord". He also pointed out their military strength to them. As they have the capital, they have access to "the chariots and horses and a fortified city and weapons". His proposal was that they should only put the best of Ahab's sons on the throne and under his leadership fight with him. He told them to appoint a kind of counter king and then, in a fight with him, decide who the real king is.

The fact that Jehu dared to say and present all this, shows that he was certain of his case. He knew the sons of Ahab. They were weak guys, just like the leaders of the city. The leaders were men similar to the kind of elders and distinguished men of Jezreel who had danced to the tune of Jezebel and killed Naboth in response to her letter (1Kgs 21:8-14).

The language of the letter is such that Jehu presented himself as the undisputed king and that whoever dared to dispute it should go ahead. As far

as he was concerned, the result was sure. The choice was up to the leaders of Samaria. Like Jehoram, they would know what kind of man Jehu was, known by all as a “furious” rider (2Kgs 9:20), a man who was afraid of nothing and no one, and who steps aside for nothing and no one. It is possible that the messengers also told how Jehu raced in Jezreel and what fate Jehoram, Ahaziah and Jezebel underwent. In any case, they referred to his acts as those that cause terror.

Would they dare to take the sword against such a man? They reasoned they shouldn’t do that. It was much wiser to join Jehu. That was what they did. They let him know that they would join him. They did so in words that implied total submission to him. This was exactly what he wanted, to use them to exterminate the offspring of Ahab without getting dirty hands himself.

When Jehu had received news from the leaders of Samaria, promising him their support, he wrote them a second letter (verse 6). He gave them a command to prove that they meant what they said. Jehu began his letter with words similar to those he had said to the officials of Jezebel: “If you are on my side” (cf. 2Kgs 9:32). He was only interested in who was for *him*. When they are for him, they will listen to his voice. Listening to the voice of the LORD was not a consideration. He has made these elders allies and instructed them to kill the sons of Ahab.

The question remains how his command in this second letter was to be understood. His writing was somewhat ambiguous. That is, “the heads of the men, your master’s sons” did not mean the literal heads, but the most important sons, the most influential. They were to take the men from the city and meet Jehu at the same time the next day. The men of the city take a literal interpretation of what the letter said, and Jehu may have meant it that way. When the heads are cut off, they were sent to Jezreel. The elders did not bring the heads themselves to offer them personally. They wanted to remain at a distance.

When Jehu received the message that the heads were delivered, he ordered the heads to be placed in two heaps near the city gate. When the people of the city went out of the town to work, they saw the heads. But Jehu was already there to explain this sinister sight. In the words he used, he

was diplomatic and insincere. He was straightforward when it came to the sword, but he was not straightforward in his language.

He declared the people innocent. As for himself, he denied any involvement in the murder of these men. Certainly, he killed Jehoram, but that was because he had to do so because the LORD ordered it, although he did not pronounce it here clearly. Who has been working in this case? No, he wouldn't be able to say that. He played the innocent, the ignorant. Although he was directly responsible for the murder, his question designated others as murderers. He said nothing about the instruction he had given.

To camouflage his innocence and ignorance even more, he gave a pious twist to his story (verse 10). They should not be too concerned about who did this. It all fell under the administration of the LORD. After all, the LORD's revenge has been carried out, hasn't it? What he in fact did was to blame the LORD.

Verse 11 is a kind of conclusion. Jehu killed all who were left of the house of Ahab. But he has also gone further. He also killed "all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests". He was not commissioned to do so. We must never go further than what the Lord tells us, no matter how justified certain things may seem. Jehu wanted to confirm his kingship, and so, cleared away everything that would hinder him. What was the power of his actions? The flesh, he acted for himself. The power of the flesh can work in spiritual things, but then more is always done than the Lord's command.

## **2Kgs 10:12-14 | The Brothers of Ahaziah Killed**

*12 Then he arose and departed and went to Samaria. On the way while he was at Beth-eked of the shepherds, 13 Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, "Who are you?" And they answered, "We are the relatives of Ahaziah; and we have come down to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother." 14 He said, "Take them alive." So they took them alive and killed them at the pit of Beth-eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them.*

Nor did Jehu receive a command from the LORD to kill the princes of Judah. Ahaziah was a son of the evil Jehoram and Athaliah and therefore a grandson of Ahab and rightly killed. The brothers of Ahaziah are not lit-



eral brothers, because Ahaziah did not have any (2Chr 21:16-17). They may have been his cousins. The fact that the men were killed was justified in God's governmental ways, because they deserved to be killed. They were friends of the house of Ahab.

## 2Kgs 10:15-16 | Jehonadab

*15 Now when he had departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab [coming] to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart?" And Jehonadab answered, "It is." [Jehu said], "If it is, give [me] your hand." And he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. 16 He said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." So he made him ride in his chariot.*

As Jehu continued, there was a sudden meeting with Jehonadab. In response to Jehu's question about the rightness of his heart, Jehonadab answered that his heart was indeed right. He had a right heart in relation to God, but not so much in relation to Jehu. What the rightness of Jehu's heart was worth, showed in his performance, especially in the way he would soon eradicate the worshippers of Baal.

Jehonadab was a remarkable man. He was of the family of Rechab, of the people of Kenites. So he was not from a tribe of God's people, but is descended from a Canaanite people (Gen 15:18-19), one whom God had said should be eradicated. Now not all Kenites lived in Canaan and therefore not all Kenites fell under the judgement. Several of them lived among God's people (Jdg 1:16; 4:17; 1Sam 15:6; 1Chr 2:55).

In Jeremiah 35 we read extensively about Jehonadab and his descendants and God's appreciation for him and his family. In that passage it turns out that Jehonadab was a faithful servant of the LORD and that his faithfulness was rewarded by the LORD. We have seen before that the period of Jehu can be compared with the period of Sardis in Revelation 3 (Rev 3:1-6). It is remarkable that we not only find Jehu, but also Jehonadab in Sardis.

In Sardis we recognize Jehu in those who say they have the name to live (Rev 3:1b). Jehu testified of himself that he lived before the LORD when he said to Jehonadab "see my zeal for the LORD". Israel is said to be "zealous for God, but not in accordance with knowledge" (Rom 10:2). That also ap-

plied to Jehu. It manifested pride, not faith, when he pointed to himself to declare his zeal for the LORD.

It must therefore be said of Jehu that his deeds have not been found completed in the sight of God (Rev 3:2b). Jehu may have eradicated the Baal worship, but the golden calves still existed. Jehu returned, so to speak, to Jeroboam and not to David. Thus, the period of Sardis is in a sense a relief after the period of Thyatira – although Sardis and Thyatira coexist in church history – but Sardis does not return to the word of the apostles and prophets. Sardis remains, so to speak, ‘hanging’ in Pergamus, that is to say, the time in which the church takes in the world.

Jehonadab we recognize in the “few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments” (Rev 3:4a). They receive a promise (Rev 3:4b), just as Jehonadab also received a promise from the LORD (Jer 35:18-19). Jehonadab was not in Judah, in Jerusalem, or near the temple, the dwelling-place of God; but he was one of the faithful among the ten apostate tribes. Jehu also liked to ensure himself of his company. Jehonadab was an influential man because of his consistent attitude to life and lifestyle. This would have appealed to the conservative subjects in his empire.

Jehu made Jehonadab his friend because of the political advantage this gave him. He used Jehonadab to strengthen his own position. When Jehu said “give your hand”, it meant more than just helping him climb into his car. It was also symbolic for the call for his help in his acquisition of kingship.

Jehonadab was standing by Jehu’s side; he climbed up into the chariot with him. Yet he took a clear place of separation from the ten tribes. This is clear from Jeremiah 35. He did not drink wine, which indicates that he had no part in the joys of the apostate people. He didn’t even plant a vineyard, because he didn’t want to be tempted to drink wine either. He didn’t even have a house or a field, but lived in tents. He did not want to be connected to the land in any way. For this whole behavior, this consistent attitude, which could also be seen in his descendants, he received God’s appreciation and reward (Jer 35:12-19).

We see something similar in Protestantism. New churches are formed there, which are separated from the evil in Sardis. They arise as a protest

against the prevailing evil. We recognize that in our days, for example, in the restored reformed church. It is a place of separation, although within the boundaries of Sardis, of the ten tribes.

### **2Kgs 10:17 | Jehu Completes His Commission**

*17 When he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah.*

In this verse the historian tells us that Jehu arrived in Samaria and completed his commission there. There he killed all those who “remained to Ahab”. With this he fulfilled “the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah” (cf. 1Kgs 21:21).

### **2Kgs 10:18-28 | The Worshipers of Baal Exterminated**

*18 Then Jehu gathered all the people and said to them, “Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. 19 Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests; let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live.” But Jehu did it in cunning, so that he might destroy the worshipers of Baal. 20 And Jehu said, “Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal.” And they proclaimed [it]. 21 Then Jehu sent throughout Israel and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And when they went into the house of Baal, the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. 22 He said to the one who [was] in charge of the wardrobe, “Bring out garments for all the worshipers of Baal.” So he brought out garments for them. 23 Jehu went into the house of Baal with Jehonadab the son of Rechab; and he said to the worshipers of Baal, “Search and see that there is here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but only the worshipers of Baal.” 24 Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed for himself eighty men outside, and he had said, “The one who permits any of the men whom I bring into your hands to escape shall give up his life in exchange.” 25 Then it came about, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the royal officers, “Go in, kill them; let none come out.” And they killed them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the royal officers threw [them] out, and went to the inner room of the house of Baal. 26 They brought out the [sacred] pillars of the house*

*of Baal and burned them. 27 They also broke down the [sacred] pillar of Baal and broke down the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day. 28 Thus Jehu eradicated Baal out of Israel.*

Jehu then goes to focus on the idolatrous worship of Baal. He continued to do well, according to the instruction of the LORD who had said that every idol must be cut off from the land (Deu 13:12-18). Only Jehu worked deceitfully. That cannot be the work of the LORD. It was a representation of the situation whereby it seems that the lie promoted God's work (cf. Rom 3:8). God never uses man's lie to maintain His truth as truth. What a contrast with Elijah who did everything openly (1Kgs 18:21-24,30). Also in this part we see that Jehu acted more out of 'anti-Ahab' thinking than out of the 'pro-LORD' thought.

He framed the case in such a way that there was no reference to the will of the LORD. Imagine that the Name of the LORD would be mentioned. Then the idolaters would immediately smell danger and his plan would have fallen to pieces. His plan worked. "All the worshipers of Baal came." Possibly under the good influence of Jehonadab, who was present there, he ensured that no servant of the LORD could be found among the worshipers of Baal. Every worshiper of Baal had to dress with the clothing of Baal. Thus every worshiper of Baal was identified. Jehu let an inspection be carried out to see if there was not inadvertently one of the servants of the LORD among the idolaters.

When all and only the worshipers of Baal were in the house of Baal, they offered "sacrifices and burnt offerings". After all the sacrifices had been offered, men prepared and instructed to kill every worshiper of Baal were sent inside by Jehu. His language was also threatening. Anyone who allowed someone to escape would have to pay for it with their own lives.

The men of Jehu executed their task thoroughly. All those in the house of Baal were killed. The bodies are thrown out. Then everything devoted to Baal was destroyed. Baal's house was demolished and turned into a latrine, the most despicable place in the city.

The result was impressive. It was a good result, but obtained by bad methods. In the ways of God, the end does not justify the means. The means must also be in accordance with His Word. We must fight lawfully (2Tim

2:5). Jehu did not commit murder here. What he did was executing idolaters by the command of God. Only the method he used was false. The Spirit will never urge anyone to bring people together under the pretext of making a sacrifice to the idols.

## 2Kgs 10:29-33 | Reward and Punishment

*29 However, [as for] the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin, from these Jehu did not depart, [even] the golden calves that [were] at Bethel and that [were] at Dan. 30 The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, [and] have done to the house of Ahab according to all that [was] in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." 31 But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel sin. 32 In those days the LORD began to cut off [portions] from Israel; and Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: 33 from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites and the Reubenites and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of the Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.*

As has already been mentioned, Jehu's works had not been found complete before God. He eradicated the Baal worship, but he left the golden calves untouched. He persisted in the sins of Jeroboam in serving the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. In this, he led the people in the way of sin.

When the balance of Jehu's life is taken, we see in verses 30-31 the two sides of God's judgment. Good was rewarded, this was first mentioned by God (verse 30). The reward was that his offspring would be on the throne until the fourth generation. This also means that it would not be permanent, as it would have been if he had been faithful. The LORD appreciated what was good with Jehu. God does not only see the wrong.

Yet "but" must follow, because of the unfaithfulness of Jehu (verse 31). As a result, judgment came in the following verses. For this the LORD used Hazael as His rod of discipline. It is in reality, as it says here, the LORD Himself who punishes Israel. He began "to make Israel smaller". All the tribes of Israel on the wilderness side of the Jordan fell into the hands of the Syrians. This was the result of this revival. Jehu had been a sham revival.

## 2Kgs 10:34-36 | The Death of Jehu

*34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu and all that he did and all his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 35 And Jehu slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son became king in his place. 36 Now the time which Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria [was] twenty-eight years.*

These verses are the end of the description of Jehu's life. He had accomplished much and has been mighty. All this history has been recorded by others. What is important to us was described in the two chapters we have just considered. It concerns the extermination of the house of Ahab and the religion associated with that house. Then Jehu's time was over and he dies. He was buried in Samaria, the place he coveted for the exercise of his power. According to the promise of God, he is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.

The length of his rule is given right at the very end of his life. Usually this is recorded at the beginning of the reign of each king. This may have something to do with the fact that his accession to the throne is not clearly mentioned anywhere in his history.

## 2 Kings 11

### **2Kgs 11:1-3 | Jehosheba Hides Joash**

*1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring. 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death. 3 So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD six years, while Athaliah was reigning over the land.*

Now we go back twenty-eight years, to the beginning of the reign of Jehu. He had just killed Ahaziah. Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had seized power. She killed her own offspring. She didn't have natural feelings. She did not need to kill many because Jehu had worked thoroughly in the execution of his commission.

Behind this woman stands Satan himself, who was out to eradicate the seed of David to prevent the Messiah from being born. But the issue did not get out of God's control. Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah, hid Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and thereby prevented the total extermination of the offspring of David. This child, like the Lord Jesus later, was taken away and hidden to stay out of the hands of murderers. Jehosheba means 'the LORD is faithful'. The LORD would not destroy Judah and kept a lamp burning for the house of David until the birth of the Messiah.

Joash was secretly fed and raised in one of the rooms of the temple and was therefore connected to the house of the LORD. He lived with the LORD. Through this hidden place he was as it were in death. When he became king, it was, so to speak, through death. At the same time, during all that period, the faithful thought that it was over and out with the kingship according to God's thoughts. Christ is also now "hidden in God" (Col 3:3) and waits until the moment He can show Himself to His people. For the faithful now this is no hidden thing, for they see Him in glory, while the world does not see Him.

Athaliah thought she could control everything. She had the power. It was a representation of the power of the papacy, of the roman-catholic church, which kills all who do not subject themselves to her (Rev 17:6). She has felt supremely powerful and has absolutely no consideration for the coming of Christ. In this woman we see the mystery of lawlessness that develops in the bosom of Christianity, i.e. the professing church.

### **2Kgs 11:4-8 | Jehoiada's Plan**

*4 Now in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of hundreds of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him in the house of the LORD. Then he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son. 5 He commanded them, saying, "This is the thing that you shall do: one third of you, who come in on the sabbath and keep watch over the king's house 6 (one third also [shall be] at the gate Sur, and one third at the gate behind the guards), shall keep watch over the house for defense. 7 Two parts of you, [even] all who go out on the sabbath, shall also keep watch over the house of the LORD for the king. 8 Then you shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within the ranks shall be put to death. And be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in."*

Only Jehoiada and Jehosheba and a few more knew of the hidden king. The whole nation was ignorant of him. It is the same now. Only a few know of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus dwells in the Spirit in what is today His temple, the church, and the body of the believer. This is hidden from the world, while unfortunately many Christians are also unaware of this.

When the believers come together as a church, they can also experience this in a special way. Christ is there, through the Spirit Himself in the midst. Although He is invisible to the natural eye, the Spirit enlightened eyes of the heart see Him. The time of His appearance is coming, when the time is fulfilled, when the fullness of the times – “the seventh year” (verse 4) – has come (Eph 1:10).

Jehoiada the priest called the army commanders to come to him. He brought them to the area where the presence of the LORD was noticeable, the house of the LORD. In His presence he made a covenant with them



and put them under oath. Then he showed them “the king’s son”. The covenant contained a wonderful promise with an important spiritual application. It was primarily about obedience and faithfulness to the Lord. If this is present, or at least if the longing for it is felt deeply, then we see the Lord Jesus of Whom Joash is a picture here.

Then Jehoiada commanded the captains how they would protect the young king. For us it means that when we see Jesus, we will also desire to protect Him from the attacks of unbelief. The Lord Jesus protects us, but it is also true that we are called to protect and defend His glory with spiritual weapons. God has entrusted us with the glory of His Son to carry through the world.

### 2Kgs 11:9-12 | Joash Crowned and Anointed

*9 So the captains of hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. And each one of them took his men who were to come in on the sabbath, with those who were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. 10 The priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and shields that [had been] King David’s, which [were] in the house of the LORD. 11 The guards stood each with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, by the altar and by the house, around the king. 12 Then he brought the king’s son out and put the crown on him and [gave him] the testimony; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, “[Long] live the king!”*

The captains executed the orders of Jehoiada exactly as they had been told. We see here that captains over others can only act well if they themselves are obedient to those who are above them (cf. Mt 8:9). The men they had under their command are the men who served or had served “on the sabbath”. The sabbath speaks of the rest of God. Only those who know and participate in the rest of God can be used to protect the king of God.

For us, it means that only believers whose feet are shod “with the preparation of the gospel of grace” (Eph 6:15) are able to properly protect the honor of Christ. These are the believers who go their way on earth with the peace of God in their hearts, who show in their lives that they are connect-

ed with Christ in heaven, as the letter to the Ephesians makes beautifully clear.

The weapons given to the men to defend themselves were not new weapons. These were the old, familiar weapons that King David had already used. It is mentioned particularly that they had come from the sanctuary. Jehoiada made a statement with these that he was going back to "what was from the beginning" (1Jn 1:1). He asked, as it were, "for the ancient paths" (Jer 6:16). The ancient Word of God is unrivalled in its battle-force. The spears are to kill the enemy, the shields are to protect themselves from the enemy's counterattacks.

The weapons with which we must fight are not the weapons of the flesh, but of the Spirit (2Cor 10:3-5). To use them properly, they must come from the presence of the Lord Jesus. They are weapons that have been tested by Him. When we are in His presence we see how He wants us to use the weapons. We then see that the strength for our struggle lies in showing His features.

Thus armed, the men stood around the king, weapons in their hands, ready for use. The positions they took up were all connected to the house of the LORD and the altar. For us it means that the spiritual battle is fought in connection with God's house. The church is closely linked to the Lord Jesus and the truth of this must be defended by us for the sake of Him Who dwells there.

Once that position was taken, the king could come out and be crowned. The crown was a diadem. The word 'diadem' here is the translation of the Hebrew word 'nezer'. From this word is also derived the Hebrew word translated with 'Nazarite'. This indicates that the ceremony was more a consecration than a coronation. This was confirmed by the anointing. The kingship of Joash was dedicated to God.

He also received "the testimony" that is, the law, as the guide for his government (Deu 17:14-20). He was to govern in accordance with the Word of God. His ordination took place before God and he was called to live and reign according to the Word of God.

We have nothing else for our stay on earth. The believers now are also "a royal priesthood" (1Pet 2:9). We are dedicated, anointed and called to pro-

claim God's virtues in the world, and this is only possible if God's Word is our guide in this. It is not about persuasion or training, but about knowing our position and obedience to live in accordance with that position.

## 2Kgs 11:13-16 | Athaliah Put to Death

*13 When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard [and of] the people, she came to the people in the house of the LORD. 14 She looked and behold, the king was standing by the pillar, according to the custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" 15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army and said to them, "Bring her out between the ranks, and whoever follows her put to death with the sword." For the priest said, "Let her not be put to death in the house of the LORD." 16 So they seized her, and when she arrived at the horses' entrance of the king's house, she was put to death there.*

Athaliah heard the sound of the tribute to the king. She was very frightened. She had lived and ruled for years with the thought that every descendant with a right to the throne was dead. Now it turned out that there was one still living.

If we faithfully show and declare our testimony to the world and the religious world, people cannot ignore the fact that the Lord Jesus, whom they believe to be dead, still lives. It is our duty to make that clear. The reactions to this will be different. There are people who repent and also join the Lord Jesus. However, there are also people whose hatred becomes visible and noticeable.

The shock that went through Athaliah did not bring her to her knees, but in strong resistance. To convince herself that what she heard and feared was true, she went to the temple, where she will have rarely been before. On entry, she saw Joash standing by the pillar, the place to be for the consecration of a king.

The sight of the king led Athaliah to tearing her clothes. This was not a sign of her humility and repentance. She screamed out that betrayal was being

committed. She was completely blind to the betrayal she had committed herself during her seizure of power.

Her shouts did not elicit any sympathy from the people. Jehoiada ordered to take her out of the temple complex. She must be put to death, but not in the temple. Even those who followed her must be put to death. There was to be no pardon for her and anyone who placed himself on her side. Then Athaliah was killed at the king's house, where she had put her false claim for such a long time. She was killed at the place where she had shown her pride.

### **2Kgs 11:17-18 | The Covenant**

*17 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they would be the LORD's people, also between the king and the people. 18 All the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.*

Here the priest made a new covenant between the LORD, the king and the people. It was a renewal of the old covenant about the people of Israel, that they would also be in practice, "the LORD's people".

When the covenant was made, and the people are again in a right relationship with the LORD, the Spirit inspired all the people of the land to go out and tear down the idols and all things pertaining to them. Then Jehoiada reinstated the offices for the house of the LORD. Also, when by the working of God's Spirit, we throw out of our lives what is not profitable, there is again room for worship and serving the Lord.

### **2Kgs 11:19-21 | Joash on the Throne**

*19 He took the captains of hundreds and the Carites and the guards and all the people of the land; and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guards to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. 20 So all the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet. For they had put Athaliah to death with the sword at the king's house. 21 Jehoash was seven years old when he became king.*

Athaliah was killed at the king's house. The way for the king according to God's appointment was now clear. The king could come out of hiding in the LORD's house and sit on his throne. This speaks of the return of the Lord Jesus from the sanctuary to openly accept His reign on earth. It also speaks of the moment in the believer's life when the Lord Jesus sits down on the throne of his heart and submits his whole life to Him.

All the people of the land were happy. The 'people of the land' refer to the people who did their work in simplicity. Intellectuals and governors usually live in cities. The city, where undoubtedly Athaliah's supporters still lived, remained quiet. These followers of the old regime hypocritically submitted to the king.

Restoration had begun, but it was still very weak. Joash was only seven years old when he became king. He still had to grow in his kingship.

## 2 Kings 12

### **2Kgs 12:1-3 | Reign of Jehoash**

*1 In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 Jehoash did right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.*

There were seven or eight kings of whom we read that they did “right in the sight of the LORD”. Without exception, however, we also read that things went wrong with them later on. Experiences with the Lord are no guarantee of remaining faithful to the Lord. In youth there is often a freshness for the Lord that can disappear later. It is a warning for older believers.

Of Jehoash we read why it was that he went wrong. As soon as Jehoiada died, things took a turn for the worse. The big question for anyone who is young is whether faith is based on their own relationship with the Lord or on that of parents or older believers. There can be new life, without practice in personal contact with the Lord and without being taught by Him.

It is not good for (young) believers to remain dependent on older believers. For sisters it is important that in their faith they are not dependent on their husbands. The reverse is also true. For example, for sisters their own life of prayer is of great importance. It should not happen that believers become helpless when certain believers disappear. This helplessness is the result of the fact that these believers have leaned too much upon other believers, without learning to bear their own responsibility. The same applies to parents and their children. They must teach their children to be independent in the Lord.

The high places mentioned in verse 3 were high places dedicated to the LORD. At such high places Solomon also sacrificed (1Kgs 3:2-3). As long as the temple was not yet built, God allowed sacrifice to be offered there. Now that there was a temple, they shouldn't sacrifice there anymore. It is

like serving God in a place where the Lord Jesus cannot be in the midst. There are Christians who believe that the Lord Jesus is everywhere in the midst, even though things have been introduced that are not in accordance with God's Word, such as a pastor appointed by man.

## 2Kgs 12:4-8 | Jehoash Commands to Restore the Temple

*4 Then Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money of the sacred things which is brought into the house of the LORD, in current money, [both] the money of each man's assessment [and] all the money which any man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the LORD, 5 let the priests take it for themselves, each from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the damages of the house wherever any damage may be found." 6 But it came about that in the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had not repaired the damages of the house. 7 Then King Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the [other] priests and said to them, "Why do you not repair the damages of the house? Now therefore take no [more] money from your acquaintances, but pay it for the damages of the house." 8 So the priests agreed that they would take no [more] money from the people, nor repair the damages of the house.*

Jehoash understood that the temple only was the place where God's people must come to sacrifice. Therefore he wanted to restore the temple. Three types of money were used for this restoration: the ransom that every numbered person had to pay (Exo 30:11-16), money from someone who had made a promise and converted that promise into a sum of money (Lev 27:1-8) and money that was given voluntarily.

Jehoash didn't use the money to build a new temple. There was no thought of a new temple by Jehoash. He did not act from a scornful attitude, disdaining the old because 'it is no longer of this time'. This is the reasoning that is often heard and acted upon in professing Christianity. The old, what God Himself has given, may be restored to its original state. For us, this means that in practicing to be a church, we return to the principles of the Word concerning the church.

At one point, "in the twenty-third year" of his reign, Jehoash noted that no work had been done to restore the temple. He called Jehoiada and the priests to give an account about this and warned them about it. Jehoash

was still so powerful here, that he could even warn Jehoiada. He did not wait for an answer – in any case, we are not informed of any answer – but immediately gave new orders to get the temple restored as soon as possible.

From the run-up to his renewed command to restore the temple, it may be possible to understand why nothing had been done so far to restore it. Jehoash said they were not to accept any more money from their acquaintances. They may have been so busy collecting and managing the money, that the work for which they received the funds did not get off the ground (cf. Acts 6:1-6).

Another way had to be found. The priests should no longer be involved in collecting money. They also did not have to contribute to the restoration of the temple. That work would be done by others.

### **2Kgs 12:9-16 | Temple Restoration Collection**

*9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid and put it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the LORD; and the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money which was brought into the house of the LORD. 10 When they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's scribe and the high priest came up and tied [it] in bags and counted the money which was found in the house of the LORD. 11 They gave the money which was weighed out into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the LORD; 12 and to the masons and the stonecutters, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the damages to the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13 But there were not made for the house of the LORD silver cups, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver from the money which was brought into the house of the LORD; 14 for they gave that to those who did the work, and with it they repaired the house of the LORD. 15 Moreover, they did not require an accounting from the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay to those who did the work, for they dealt faithfully. 16 The money from the guilt offerings and the money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD; it was for the priests.*



This part is a picture of the construction of the house of God, the church, that is in our time. That house is in decay. There are many in that house who have no life from God. Many believers associate themselves with unbelievers because they do not ask if there is life. We must change in God's house what is not good in it. All that is not of the Lord must be removed or restored according to His will.

Many revivals are aimed at personal experience. However, what is important is the church of the living God. Whoever repents, becomes a member of the body of Christ. This means that such a person is there for the others and for the whole. How a member functions in the church depends on how he or she deals with the Lord. If there is contact with the Lord and His Word is read, He will make known what we can do for others. We live in an 'I' era. We also see this in the perception of faith, which is mainly 'I-focused'.

The collection of the money for the restoration of the temple was now put in a box. Jehoiada bored a hole in the lid. The funds collected were used only for repair work and not for making utensils in the temple. The money was given to those who did the repair work. They were to freely dispose of it and buy what they thought they needed. They did not have to account for how exactly they spent the money. There was trust because they dealt faithfully. Trust was given, not demanded.

There also remained a strict separation between the gifts for the restoration and money from the offerings. The money from the guilt offerings and the money from the sin offerings was for the priests and was not used for the repair work. The money from the offerings came from the twenty percent to be given when bringing a guilt offering (Lev 5:16).

## **2Kgs 12:17-18 | Hazael Threatens Jerusalem**

*17 Then Hazael king of Aram went up and fought against Gath and captured it, and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18 Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred things that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred things and all the gold that was found among the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's*

*house, and sent [them] to Hazael king of Aram. Then he went away from Jerusalem.*

Without giving any reason, the historian suddenly mentioned Hazael's march against Jerusalem after capturing Gath. In 2 Chronicles 24 we read why this discipline came upon Judah (2Chr 24:17-24). There we see that Jehoash was doing well, as long as he was under the good influence of Jehoiada, the priest. When Jehoiada passed away, he listened to others. Jehoash was a man who can be influenced quickly. He admitted quickly, he had no strong opinion of his own. Good friends have a good influence, bad friends have a bad influence.

The result was that he left the LORD. Because of this the temple didn't mean much to him anymore. When he came under pressure from Hazael, he no longer resorted to the LORD. The enemy came down upon him as a chastisement from the LORD. That was His purpose. Instead of going to the LORD though, he devised his own solution. He took treasures from the temple, which first meant so much to him, to pay the enemy to depart from him. He succeeded in his purpose, but at the same time he was further away from the LORD than ever.

### **2Kgs 12:19-21 | Death of Joash**

*19 Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 20 His servants arose and made a conspiracy and struck down Joash at the house of Millo [as he was] going down to Silla. 21 For Jozacar the son of Shimeath and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, struck [him] and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and Amaziah his son became king in his place.*

The end of Joash is humiliating. He was murdered by two of his servants. These men were sons of pagan mothers (2Chr 24:26). Joash was buried in the city of David with his fathers. It does not mention that he was interred in the graves of the kings, which has been interpreted as a sign of disapproval of his later behavior.

## 2 Kings 13

### **2Kgs 13:1-9 | Jehoahaz King Over Israel**

*1 In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel at Samaria, [and he reigned] seventeen years. 2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin; he did not turn from them. 3 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael. 4 Then Jehoahaz entreated the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them. 5 The LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Arameans; and the sons of Israel lived in their tents as formerly. 6 Nevertheless they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained standing in Samaria. 7 For he left to Jehoahaz of the army not more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots and 10,000 footmen, for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 9 And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria; and Joash his son became king in his place.*

After the history of Joash, king of Judah, in the previous chapter, we will now return to the ten tribes. We will study the history of the Northern Kingdom of the ten tribes during the reign of the house of Jehu. This period of reign was the longest in the history of the ten tribes' realm. It was a family reign of no less than five successive kings. It started with Jehu, who was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, then came the son of Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and after him, his son, Jeroboam II and finally Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II. But then it ended.

The reign of Jehu's house had been limited to four generations after him because Jehu's zeal had been limited or partial. He had done much that

God has asked of him, but his heart had not been wholly with the LORD. He had allowed idolatry to persist in the land.

It has already been noted that the reign of the kings of the ten tribes is a picture of the development of church history given in Revelation 2-3. We recognize the phase of Jehu's house in the history of the church in the letter to the church in Sardis (Rev 3:1-6). What is said to and of Sardis is a bright spot compared with Thyatira, as the history of Jehu was a bright spot after the history of the house of Ahab.

However, of Jehu and his descendants it was also said that they persisted in idolatry. That is why it says of these descendants that they did "evil in the sight of the LORD" (verse 2). This resembles what must be said of Sardis, that they have the name to live, but in reality they are dead (Rev 3:1b).

Because of the infidelity of Jehoahaz, the LORD sent Hazael as a rod of discipline. Thereby He wanted to make them to return to Him. Hazael oppressed the people of God. That is why the prophet Elisha wept (2Kgs 8:11-12).

Then we read something of Jehoahaz that made him unique among the kings of Israel. For we read for the first and last time, and thus the only time of a king of Israel, that he entreated the favor of the LORD. Literally it says that Joahaz 'caressed the face of the LORD'. That shows how intensely he prayed.

This prayer was not without an answer. The LORD gave a deliverer. It was as with Ahab that a little humiliation before God allowed God's grace to flow (cf. verse 23; 1Kgs 21:27-29). It is not clear who the deliverer was and when the deliverance took place. Perhaps the writings point to Jehoash, the son of Joahaz, being this deliverer, as is written in verse 25. There we read that Jehoash defeated the Syrians three times. It is also possible that Jeroboam II is meant, of whom it is said that the LORD by his hand saved Israel (2Kgs 14:27). Unfortunately it must be said that, despite the deliverance, they persisted in idolatry (verse 6).

Verse 7 connects to verse 4. Hazael inflicted a major blow on Jehoahaz's army, reducing his power to a minimum. What remained of his power is described "in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel", as well as

“all that he did and his might”. After this mention follows the announcement of his death and funeral.

### **2Kgs 13:10-13 | Jehoash King Over Israel**

*10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] sixteen years. 11 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin, but he walked in them. 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 13 So Joash slept with his fathers, and Jeroboam sat on his throne; and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.*

The historian is brief in his report on the reign of Jehoash. In this report we hear the refrain that sounds of all the kings of Israel. This refrain is a summary of the Holy Spirit of his history. No further description of his actions is given. About the power with which he fought against Amaziah, is mentioned in the following chapter, included in the description of Amaziah's reign (2Kgs 14:8-15). Then the writer mentions the death and funeral of Jehoash. That seems to be the end of his history, except we get another report of a meeting he had with Elisha.

### **2Kgs 13:14-19 | Jehoash Visits the Sick Elisha**

*14 When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” 15 Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrows.” So he took a bow and arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” And he put his hand [on it], then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. 17 He said, “Open the window toward the east,” and he opened [it]. Then Elisha said, “Shoot!” And he shot. And he said, “The LORD's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed [them].” 18 Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground,” and he struck [it] three times and stopped. 19 So the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times,*

*then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed [it]. But now you shall strike Aram [only] three times."*

Suddenly we meet Elisha again here. The last thing we have heard of him was related to the anointing of Jehu (2Kgs 9:1-4), almost forty-five years before this moment. All this time he had lived in secret. Elisha was now an old man and his end was approaching. He was sick and about to die of that illness.

By the way, we see here that the claim that a believer should not be ill is a lie. God can use a disease as a means in His hand, to take a believer to Himself. He did that here with Elisha. There is no trace that he was sick because of a sin or something like that. It is simply mentioned that he was sick because of the illness of which he would die.

Before he died, a few remarkable things happened that were also characteristic of his whole life. His end was as remarkable as the beginning and the whole course of his history. We read that the LORD told Elijah of Elisha that he would kill him who escapes the sword of Jehu (1Kgs 19:17). This was going to happen here, by the hand of Jehoash.

Jehoash came to visit Elisha. A young king came to an old, dying prophet. In a way, this can be compared to the combination of the young Elisha and the departing Elijah. Jehoash also used the words Elisha speaks when Elijah was taken from him (verse 14; 2Kgs 2:12). Jehoash thus said the same as Elisha said about Elijah, that in this one man the whole power of Israel was concentrated and that the whole power was to be taken from Israel when Elisha died. The latter was not the case with Elijah, because Elisha followed him while his spirit rested on him. But if Elisha died, there would be no successor to continue in his power.

With Elisha, God's power was present. Wicked Jehoash was well aware of that. He used the same words as Elisha, but he did not have the same faith. That is clear from what followed. He was tested whether he wanted to have the spiritual power of Elisha, as Elisha had wanted from Elijah and had also received it.

The test consisted of the way he handled a bow and arrows. Jehoash had to get them for Elisha. When he had put his hand on the bow by order of Elisha, Elisha put his hands on Jehoash's hands. This action shows that

Jehoash was the instrument to break the power of Hazael, but he had to understand that his power lay in the power of Elisha. Of course, this was not physical strength, but the spiritual strength of this man of God. By Elisha placing his hands on the hands of Joash, what the LORD has said about them is fulfilled (1Kgs 19:17).

Jehoash was then instructed to open the window to the east. The east speaks of a new day, of new hope. Through that open window Jehoash had to shoot an arrow. The order to do so sounded with force from the mouth of the weak, dying prophet. Elisha declared that this arrow was “the LORD’s arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram”. In this arrow the power of the LORD was present. Elisha added: “For you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed [them].” If he expected it from God’s power, he would bring about the deliverance of the enemy, Syria. From everything Elisha said, it became clear that all actions had a symbolic meaning.

After the education came the test to see if he had understood. Elisha told him to take the arrows in his hand and strike the ground. Jehoash did what Elisha said. From what he did it becomes clear that he had understood something about it, but that the essential message had passed him by. He should have empathized with this symbol (cf. 1Kgs 22:11) of victory. Then he would have struck many times. But he only struck three times. As a result, he was not able to completely destroy the enemy.

If we have little faith, little will come about. Just like Jehoash, we often lack the energy of faith that God will do a great work. We often remain passive. Jehoash received what he believed. He struck three times, and would achieve three victories (verse 25).

## 2Kgs 13:20-21 | Death of Elisha

*20 Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year. 21 As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet.*

Jehoash's faith was weak, because he did not know the secret of life out of death. The power of God was also with Elisha in his death. Even in his death, that power remained present. Elisha remained a source of strength to live. The power of God that becomes visible in the resurrection, is the victory over death. It is about faith in the God who can give life out of death, even now, but then spiritually. We may know that true power lies in the grave of the Lord Jesus. In that grave also lies the beginning of the new life we have through His death.

Because of the unfaithfulness of God's people, the enemies, the bands of Moab, were able to come and rob the land at the beginning of the year. In that situation God gave a wonderful testimony of the power of His grace, in the resurrection from the dead. The occasion was the burial of a man. While the man was taken to his grave, the company was attacked by a band. Forced by the emergency, the group threw the man into the nearest grave. It turned out to be the grave of Elisha.

As soon as the man in the grave touched Elisha's bones, he came back to life. What happened here can be seen as a summary of the whole life of Elisha. He was the man who preached in the resurrection power of God. The other dead man made alive by Elisha lay, so to speak, in the same place, the bed of the man of God (2Kgs 4:21). We can see in this, the picture that those who became one with the Lord Jesus in His death have become alive through His death.

In a general sense, we can also see Elisha as a picture of every man of God. We know that where a man of God is working, new life will come. A man of God is in touch with the living God and passes on the life of God in all his service.

The man who came to life can be seen as a picture of the faithful remnant. Israel is currently dead, but the people will come to life by touching the Lord Jesus, that is, by faith in Him. When Israel is again accepted by God as His people, it is nothing but "life from the dead" (Rom 11:15). That life has its origin in the tomb of the Lord Jesus. By this touch the people will rise up "on their feet". It will become an independent nation again and then walk in the way by God's direction.



**2Kgs 13:22-25 | God Is Gracious to His People**

*22 Now Hazael king of Aram had oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now. 24 When Hazael king of Aram died, Ben-hadad his son became king in his place. 25 Then Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again from the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken in war from the hand of Jehoahaz his father. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the cities of Israel.*

In this section we find a final testimony of the grace of God. This grace could not be great because of the absence of repentance and conversion. Yet there was that grace. Grace finds its source in God Himself. The promises God has made to us are not because of our faithfulness, but because of, and based on the work of His Son.

It is remarkable that the manifestation of God's grace is expressed in three different words: He was 'gracious' to them, He had 'compassion' on them, and He 'turned' to them. God has never finally rejected His people.

The effect of God's grace was beneficial to Israel. God, in His grace, gave Jehoash the ability to take the cities of Israel from the power of the Syrians who possessed them. This will have been a real blessing for those cities themselves. This freed them from the yoke of oppression. It would also have been a blessing for the whole kingdom, which had been strengthened by the return of the cities under Israel's flag.

By God's grace Jehoash defeated the Syrians three times, just as often as he had struck the ground with the arrows (verses 18-19). But then his victories came to an end.

## 2 Kings 14

### **2Kgs 14:1-4 | Amaziah Becomes King of Judah**

*1 In the second year of Joash son of Joahaz king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. 3 He did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father; he did according to all that Joash his father had done. 4 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.*

So far, we have seen events in the Northern Kingdom of the ten tribes, mainly in connection with Elijah and Elisha. What remains is the history of Israel and Judah to their end. Nevertheless, there were occasional revivals. The main idea of the remaining chapters, however, is pride and the subsequent fall (Pro 16:18), and the lessons we can learn from this.

The recorded events alternate regularly between the northern and southern realms. We go back again to a king from the house of David, Amaziah, the son of Joash. As with other kings, the name of this king's mother is also mentioned (2Kgs 8:26; 12:1). The mothers of these kings were important and are therefore mentioned. Their influence on the forming of the spiritual character of kings was great. This influence is greatest in the first five years of education.

Jehoaddin, the mother of Amaziah, was one of the two women whom Jehoiada gave to Joash (2Chr 24:3). She must have been a woman who feared God. Her name means 'LORD, how long yet'. She was probably born under the reign of the wicked Athaliah and her parents gave her that name at a very distressful time.

Immediately after mentioning the name of his mother we read that Amaziah "did right in the sight of the LORD". We read this because he had such a mother. It is said of several kings. Yet there is a difference. Amaziah was also said to have done "not like David his father". That too is said of some of the kings of Judah. Some other kings did. They stood out above the oth-

ers. Amaziah acted more like his father Joash, who had done well while Jehoiada was still living. With Amaziah things also went wrong later, just like they went wrong with Joash in his later life.

He also allowed the high places to exist. It was the high places where the LORD was worshiped and which remained after the temple was built. That should not have happened, they should have been removed, because they had had their time. This weakness turned to become a trap. The higher the position, the deeper one can fall. This applies not only to young people, but certainly also to the elderly.

### **2Kgs 14:5-7 | First Government Actions of Amaziah**

*5 Now it came about, as soon as the kingdom was firmly in his hand, that he killed his servants who had slain the king his father. 6 But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the book of the Law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin." 7 He killed [of] Edom in the Valley of Salt 10,000 and took Sela by war, and named it Joktheel to this day.*

The first act of Amaziah's reign described is that of carrying out a righteous judgment. He killed the servants who had killed his father (2Kgs 12:21). When exercising the judgment, Amaziah took into account an important principle, which is that everyone is punished for his own sin. The king was the highest judge. Amaziah adhered to the Word of God and did not impose any greater punishment. He did not, what would have been conceivable, 'avenge' himself on his father's murderers. He killed only the criminals but not their families, according to what was "written in the book of the Law of Moses" (Deu 24:16). Discipline must always take place according to God's Word and not according to our feelings.

Another act of Amaziah was to defeat Edom. In 2 Chronicles 25 there are more details about this battle against Edom and what the consequences were (2Chr 25:5-16). There we see that he not only had an army from Judah, but also hired many soldiers from the northern kingdom. If a prophet called him to account, he sent him away. He also achieved that great victory.

## 2Kgs 14:8-14 | Amaziah Defeated by Jehoash

*8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us face each other." 9 Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, "The thorn bush which was in Lebanon sent to the cedar which was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' But there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trampled the thorn bush. 10 You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Enjoy your glory and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you, even you, would fall, and Judah with you?" 11 But Amaziah would not listen. So Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. 12 Judah was defeated by Israel, and they fled each to his tent. 13 Then Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem and tore down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, 400 cubits. 14 He took all the gold and silver and all the utensils which were found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.*

In his pride and overconfidence Amaziah then challenged Jehoash. Why did he do that? The reason becomes clear when we read 2 Chronicles 25. When Amaziah returned to Edom after his victory, he also took the idols of Edom with him and bows down to them. That is no longer the worship to the LORD on the high places, but outright idolatry.

The LORD sent a prophet who spoke to him about this. However, he was not listening. Instead, having become arrogant by the great victory over Edom, he fought with Jehoash, king of Israel. His heart was darkened by idolatry. Because of this he was deaf to God's prophet. He could no longer think well and came to the folly described here.

Jehoash was also arrogant, which is expressed in the fable he tells. He compared Amaziah with a thistle and himself with a cedar. The animals of the field are the soldiers of Jehoash. They will defeat the thistle, Amaziah and his army. That is what did happen. At the same time, the fable was also a reprimand for Amaziah. A believer was reprimanded by an unbeliever.

However, Amaziah persisted in his haughty plan, with a dramatic effect on him and his people.

Two proud kings stood opposite each other, one was a believer, the other was an unbeliever. Of Amaziah we read that he did what was right in the sight of the LORD (verse 3); of Joash we read that he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD (2Kgs 13:11). The victory was given by the LORD to the unbelieving Jehoash. If the righteous do wrong, he will find God opposing his way. We see that in the defeat that Amaziah suffered.

The believer has to live according to God's ways of government. God judges His own on earth; He judges the unbelievers after the end of their lives. If a believer goes a wrong way, he cannot count on the help of the LORD and must experience His discipline. The help experienced by the unbeliever will testify against him when he is judged forever.

Judah was beaten by Israel and Amaziah was captured by Jehoash. Amaziah was the first king of the house Judah to be captured by a king of Israel. Jehoash also made a breach in the wall of Jerusalem. That was the first time something like that had happened. Jehoash was the only king of Israel, who in all the wars between the two and ten tribes broke through as far as Jerusalem.

Once Jehoash was in Jerusalem, he plundered the city. He took everything of value with him and returned to Samaria laden with the booty.

## 2Kgs 14:15-20 | Death of Jehoash and Amaziah

*15 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 16 So Jehoash slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son became king in his place. 17 Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 19 They conspired against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there. 20 Then they brought him on horses and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.*

The death of Jehoash has already been reported (2Kgs 13:12-13). This happens again now because of the intertwining of his history with the history of Amaziah in verses 8-14. After the death of Jehoash, Amaziah lived another fifteen years. In this we see the grace of God that gives Amaziah another fifteen years after his shameful defeat to come to humility and conversion.

Whether he has really repented is not mentioned. His end is as insulting as that of his father Joash. He too became the victim of a conspiracy.

### **2Kgs 14:21-22 | Azariah Made King**

*21 All the people of Judah took Azariah, who [was] sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. 22 He built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers.*

After the death of Amaziah, Azariah, also called Uzziah (2Chr 26:1), becomes king. The names Azaria and Uzziah have almost the same meaning. Azaria means ‘in the LORD is help’ and Uzziah means ‘whose strength is the LORD’. Because he was only sixteen years old and there could not be an ordinary procedure of succession because of the sudden and minor death of his father, he is made king by “all the people of Judah”.

The only act mentioned here of Azariah was that he expanded, or reinforced, Elath and brought it back to Judah. With this, Azariah seems to complete the subjugation of Edom to Israel. Elath was an important port city in the area of Edom (1Kgs 9:26). The mention of this act gives rise to the idea that it also marks the power of his reign.

### **2Kgs 14:23-27 | Jeroboam II King Over Israel**

*23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel became king in Samaria, [and reigned] forty-one years. 24 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. 25 He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. 26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, [which was] very bitter; for there*

*was neither bond nor free, nor was there any helper for Israel. 27 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.*

Now we go back to the northern kingdom. After Joash's death, his son Jeroboam became king. We don't know why Joash named his son and heir to the throne Jeroboam. It is remarkable that he named his son after the man who gave Israel two alternative places of worship, both having a golden calf.

That Jeroboam made Israel sin, a refrain that we hear from every king who ruled over the kingdom of the ten tribes, apparently didn't concern Joash at all. On the contrary, it seems that he venerated Jeroboam and therefore gave his son the same name. To distinguish him from the first king of the ten tribes' realm, this Jeroboam is called Jeroboam II in these comments.

The northern kingdom blossomed under Jeroboam II. Seen superficially, it seems that he received the blessing of God. There was exceptionally great prosperity under his reign. He also ruled for a long time, longer than any other king had ruled over the kingdom. He was the third generation after Jehu. His son ruled for only a few months, and then the reign of the family of Jehu came to a close.

Then we hear of the prophet Jonah. Prophets act when the people have departed from God, as in this instance. Usually the prophets call for repentance and threaten with God's judgment if people don't repent. That was not the case here. The message of the prophet Jonah was different. He prophesied that there would be prosperity.

We also have a book in the Bible about this same Jonah. His prophecy in this passage, however, is not in his book of the Bible. His prophecy refers to the near future, not to the distant future, as was customary for God's prophets with their own Bible book. From this time the service of the writing prophets begins. The prophet Isaiah began prophesying in the days of Uzziah. Amos and Hosea also started prophesying in these days (Amos 7:9-15).

The reason for sending Jonah was that the LORD saw the misery of Israel, that they had no helper. The misery in which people find themselves is a consequence of their abandonment of the LORD. Therefore He must let

this misery come upon His people. But in spite of His judgment He would not erase the name of the people from under heaven.

Through a man like Jeroboam II the LORD gave his people deliverance. Here again it was the grace of God Who used a man who did not take Him into account. The prosperity of Jeroboam II was not a sign of God's approval, but only of His compassion.

### **2Kgs 14:28-29 | Death of Jeroboam II**

*28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam and all that he did and his might, how he fought and how he recovered for Israel, Damascus and Hamath, [which had belonged] to Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel, and Zechariah his son became king in his place.*

In a few verses the entire government of Jeroboam is described. God was not impressed by everything Jeroboam had done and so gave few details about his achievements. We do not get a summary of all his deeds. These were in the books that people keep, but not in God's Word.



## 2 Kings 15

### Introduction

In this chapter, the author lets the history of seven kings pass us by at a rapid pace: beginning and ending with a king of Judah – Azariah at the beginning, verses 1-7, and Jotham at the end, verses 32-38 – and five kings of Israel in between (verses 8-31).

### 2Kgs 15:1-7 | Azariah King of Judah

*1 In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah became king. 2 He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 3 He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 4 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. 5 The LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death. And he lived in a separate house, while Jotham the king's son was over the household, judging the people of the land. 6 Now the rest of the acts of Azariah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 7 And Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and Jotham his son became king in his place.*

The reign of Azariah is described in the usual terms, with the exception of verse 5. Azariah ruled for a long time. That indicates a certain stability in Judah. This contrasts sharply with the disorder prevailing in Israel. The five kings mentioned below succeeded each other during his reign.

The spiritual level of Azariah was like that of his father but not like that of David. Also during his life, people still brought their sacrifices to the high places. Only when Hezekiah ruled were these high places removed.

Azariah had also become unfaithful after a good start. How difficult it is to remain faithful while having a lot of power and good deeds. When he was mighty, he became proud (2Chr 26:17-21). He forgot that he owed his power to the LORD. He raised himself to a position that the LORD had not

given him. He wanted to sacrifice, something he was not allowed. When he was warned, he became angry. Then he was smitten with leprosy. Azariah then had to live apart from people. That was his destiny until the day of his death. His son was in charge of the royal house.

Leprosy is a picture of sin breaking out. We also saw this with Miriam (Num 12:10) and Gehazi (2Kgs 5:27). Suddenly, others see sin revealing itself in a believer. Primal sin is pride, the sin of Satan (1Tim 3:6b) and of Adam, who both wanted to be like God. This sin is in the heart of each of us. We must remember that we are not too good for sinning (cf. Gal 6:1). We need to question ourselves about how we react when others address us.

### **2Kgs 15:8-12 | Zechariah King Over Israel**

*8 In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in Samaria [for] six months. 9 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. 10 Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him before the people and killed him, and reigned in his place. 11 Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 12 This is the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." And so it was.*

After the death of Jeroboam II his son Zechariah became king of Israel. He was the last king of the house of Jehu. Then the reign of the house of Jehu is over. The last king ruled only six months. Yet it was long enough to reveal himself as a king who had not departed from the sins of the first king of Israel.

His reign was so short because he was murdered after only six months. After this the kings follow each other regularly because each reigning king is murdered by his successor. The prophet Hosea spoke about it. Hosea began to prophesy in the days of Jeroboam II (Hos 1:1). In the first chapter of his prophecy the LORD spoke of punishing the house of Jehu for the bloodshed (Hos 1:4). That time had come.

That the kings succeeded each other by killing the ruling king, says Hosea sharply: “bloodshed follows bloodshed” (Hos 4:2). This seems to indicate that from Hosea chapter 4 onwards, he describes the situation as it started with Shallum. The statement “they have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know [it]” (Hos 8:4a) seems to confirm this. They appointed kings, but without the LORD.

That Shallum, by the murder of Zechariah, fulfilled the word of the LORD (2Kgs 10:30; Amos 7:9), did not diminish his own responsibility. Here again we see the two sides: the side of man’s responsibility and the side of God’s counsel. Shallum could have said with a pious appeal to what God had said, that he had done the will of God. But it was not like that. He had acted out of his own will and must bear the punishment for his sin.

At the same time God had fulfilled His counsel through this action. The last part of verse 12 emphasizes that: “And so it was.” It happened exactly as the LORD said and not otherwise. In Hebrew they are the same words as those used in Genesis 1, always after God had spoken, and in that passage translated “and it was so” (Gen 1:7,9,11,15,24,31).

## 2Kgs 15:13-16 | Shallum King Over Israel

*13 Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned one month in Samaria. 14 Then Menahem son of Gadi went up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and struck Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria, and killed him and became king in his place. 15 Now the rest of the acts of Shallum and his conspiracy which he made, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. 16 Then Menahem struck Tiphshah and all who were in it and its borders from Tirzah, because they did not open [to him]; therefore he struck [it] and ripped up all its women who were with child.*

Shallum had not been in power for long, only one month. His reign was so short that he was unable to lead the people. As the only king of the five mentioned here, his name does not include the refrain that he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. When he had ruled for a one month, he was murdered by Menahem, after which Menahem himself sat on the throne.

What an anti-testimony the people present here of the LORD. As people they should have witnessed the great goodness of the LORD. Instead, they slaughter each other. It is a warning to us that we must be careful not to live dishonorably with other members of God's people, wherever they may be.

A special atrocity is mentioned of Menahem. Because a gate had not been opened for him, he was severely offended in his pride. He was king! How dare they shut him out instead of receiving him as king with all the honor that a king is worth! He made them pay for that with extra-ordinary cruelty. He cut open the belly of all pregnant women. Menahem lacked all respect for life. This atrocity was committed here by someone who belonged to God's people (cf. 2Kgs 8:12; Hos 13:16; Amos 1:13).

The barbaric cruelty he committed and the lack of respect for life he showed are today found in cultivated form in the abortion clinics.

## **2Kgs 15:17-22 | Menahem King Over Israel**

*17 In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king over Israel [and reigned] ten years in Samaria. 18 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. 19 Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver so that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his rule. 20 Then Menahem exacted the money from Israel, even from all the mighty men of wealth, from each man fifty shekels of silver to pay the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria returned and did not remain there in the land. 21 Now the rest of the acts of Menahem and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? 22 And Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son became king in his place.*

Menahem, who came to power by murder, was king over Israel for a period of ten years. During his reign, "Pul, king of Assyria" came against him. This is the first time we read of the king of Assyria in the Bible. Menahem prevented a confrontation by paying a large sum of money. He took that money away from a number of wealthy people. It is quite probable that these people became so wealthy in the time of economic prosperity under

Jeroboam II. Here, however, they were obliged to cede a considerable part of their fortune to Menahem. Here we see how relative wealth is.

But Menahem did not only buy off an attack by Pul with this money. He gave so much money that he could negotiate an extra advantage. That extra advantage was getting Pul on his side. The king of Assyria was bought over as an ally, someone who would support him when facing an enemy. He sought support from someone who first had sought his downfall and in essence still did. How can anyone be so blind to the real nature of a sworn enemy? This is only possible if there is no trust in the LORD.

Remarkably enough Menahem dies a natural death. He was not killed by the next one who wanted to be king, but is succeeded by his son Pekahiah. Pekahiah was murdered again.

## 2Kgs 15:23-26 | Pekahiah King Over Israel

*23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] two years. 24 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. 25 Then Pekah son of Remaliah, his officer, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house with Argob and Arieah; and with him were fifty men of the Gileadites, and he killed him and became king in his place. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah and all that he did, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.*

Pekahiah reigned two years. That relatively short period was long enough to make the refrain sound over the whole of his reign that he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. He is succeeded by the man who, by killing him, put an end to his reign. That man was Pekah, his officer.

Pekah was helped in his murder of Pekahiah by the Gileadites, a people who live on the wilderness side of the Jordan. This may be an indication that political interests played a role in the murder of this king – as may be the case with other murders of kings. We also saw these political interests when kings requested the support of neighboring peoples, sometimes of Assyria and sometimes of Egypt.

The formation of cliques within the present people of God, the church, is unfortunately also now not a strange phenomenon (1Cor 1:11-12). Cliques always bring division and dissatisfaction.

### **2Kgs 15:27-31 | Pekah King Over Israel**

*27 In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] twenty years. 28 He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. 30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Pekah and all that he did, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.*

Pekah was in power for a longer period of time. He reigned over Israel for twenty years, doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, like all the kings of Israel. In his days, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came against Israel and conquered a number of cities and territories. He took their inhabitants to Assyria. Thus he broke their power. He took “Gilead” away, the part of Israel on the wilderness side of the Jordan, the area of the two and a half tribes, and “Galilee, all the land of Naphtali”, that is the whole north of Israel; nothing remained of it.

Pekah not only lost a lot of territory and subjects but also his life. He was murdered by Hoshea, who became king in his place. Hoshea was a pro-Assyrian king. There was not much left for him, as king, to rule over. Only in 2 Kings 17 we find out more about king Hoshea.

### **2Kgs 15:32-38 | Jotham King of Judah**

*32 In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. 33 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name [was] Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. 34 He did what was right in*

*the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. 35 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD. 36 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. 38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Ahaz his son became king in his place.*

With the arrival of Jotham, the son of Uzziah or Azariah, as king of Judah, we are back in the realm of the two tribes. It is said of him, as of eight other kings who ruled after Solomon, that he did what was right in the sight of the LORD. Of those eight, Jotham was the only one of whom it is not said that he became unfaithful at a later age. He followed his father in doing well. He did not follow the evil his father did. However, the people he ruled, continued their pernicious practices (2Chr 27:1-2).

In his days Micah began to prophesy (Mic 1:1). The prophet Isaiah began his service in the last years of his father Uzziah (Isa 1:1). Isaiah described the evil deeds in detail in his book. Kings can be used by the LORD for a revival. Revivals, however, have little real and lasting results because of the fact that under the surface people's desire for idolatry in whatever form is always present.

In the history of Israel and Judah, all went further and further downhill. In Israel, the last king, Hoshea, was ruling. In Judah it would take a while, but also for that kingdom the curtain was about to fall because of their stubborn departure from the LORD. It was the end-time of God's people, just as in this day. Where can true love for, and faithfulness to the Lord be found? Church history is often made and written by the great men, but what did it really look like among the people? The masses often follow superficially, while only a few go into the depths.

Jotham was also interested in the temple. This is evident from the only act that was mentioned of him. It is noted of him that he "built the upper gate of the house of the LORD".

Because of the constant unfaithfulness of the people, the LORD had to send enemies against Judah. The new enemy was “Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah”. Pekah was the king of Israel who, in an ungodly covenant with Rezin, the wicked king of Syria, stood up against his brothers. The fact that the LORD did this did not diminish the responsibility of Pekah to do this evil work.



## 2 Kings 16

### **2Kgs 16:1-4 | Ahaz Becomes King of Judah**

*1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. 2 Ahaz [was] twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David [had done]. 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel. 4 He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.*

In this chapter the historian continues with the description of the kings who ruled over the two tribes realm. Ahaz the son of Jotham has come to power. This whole chapter is devoted to him and gives a clear picture of his reign. That picture is not rosy.

The summary of his reign, which lasted sixteen years, is that “he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David [had done]”. It does not say that he did what was evil, but that he did not do what was right. This is to make the contrast with David clear. David did in all what was right in the sight of the LORD. Everything Ahaz did was completely and radically contrary to what David did. That the phrase “the LORD his God” was mentioned, is because this was his confession.

The deeds described of Ahaz bear witness to great corruption. They were acts modelled on the kings of Israel. Ahaz even added a little extra: He “even made his son pass through the fire”. He sacrificed his son to the realm of the dead. So it was not just acting like the kings of Israel, but he did “according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel”. This man had lost every connection with the LORD his God. The contrast between what he confessed and what he did could not be greater.

His entire regard towards idols and idolatry is evident from his places of sacrifice. He offered not only on the high places that were first dedicated to the LORD, but on all places raised above the ground.

### **2Kgs 16:5-9 | Ahaz Makes an Alliance with Assyria**

*5 Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to [wage] war; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 6 At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram, and cleared the Judeans out of Elath entirely; and the Arameans came to Elath and have lived there to this day. 7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me." 8 Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. 9 So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried [the people of] it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.*

While Ahaz was so immersed in idolatry, enemies approached him: "Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah." They came "to Jerusalem to [wage] war". As always, enemies attack God's people when they depart from God. Without God they are always weaker than the weakest enemy. At the same time, a hostile people is a means in God's hand to bring His people back to Him. And what an abhorrent role did Pekah play in his covenant with Syria: he, the king of Israel, wanted to help put an end to the house of David.

In Isaiah 7 we read more details about Rezin and Pekah coming up to Jerusalem. There we see that God wanted to act in grace with Ahaz. In His grace God did not allow these enemies to take Jerusalem (Isa 7:1). Then through Isaiah He had a message for Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field" (Isa 7:3). It was a symbolic place, a place that speaks of purifying and refreshment, offered to him if he would be willing to listen to the voice of the LORD.

Isaiah presented the enemies, "Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah" (Isa 7:4), as completely trivial. He prophesied about their end by the power

of Assyria, from whom Ahaz expected help. Isaiah encouraged Ahaz that there was a solution, if he would quietly trust in the LORD. Ahaz was even offered to ask for a sign from the LORD, so he could be sure that the LORD would deliver him from those enemies. But Ahaz refused this offer with pretended piety (Isa 7:10-12). He had his own agenda.

Then the LORD Himself gave a sign, not to Ahaz, but to the house of David. He promised the Messiah (Isa 7:13). He is the answer to all political questions. He also let Ahaz know that he himself would perish by the ally on whom he had placed his hope, because he refused to trust in the LORD (Isa 7:17).

Ahaz was one of those figures who only trusted in their own mind and perception. It was too vague for him to Trust in the LORD, Someone you cannot see, on Whom you just have to wait and believe what He says will happen. Then look at Assyria. He was nearby, you could see him and he helped immediately.

Isn't that a challenging situation that we recognize, in which we too can find ourselves? Don't we often choose a direct solution instead of submitting to what God says? Do I choose what I think works, or do I wait for what God has offered? For example, let us think of tensions in a marriage. In a marriage disappointments can occur. Is the husband then looking for conversation with his wife, perhaps also with the help of someone else, so that they can pray together again for their need? Or is he seeking refuge with another woman, someone from his work, with whom he can tell his story, someone 'who understands me so well'?

The request to Assyria for help may also cost some money. The costs for help were paid with silver and gold from the temple, "the house of the LORD". Every covenant a Christian enters into with the enemy of God, the world, is at the expense of the truth of reconciliation, of which the silver speaks, and at the expense of the glory of God, of which the gold speaks. Again and again the temple was looted for the benefit of the world. God and His interests no longer mattered.

The covenant seemed to work and to be worth the price. The king of Assyria did what was asked of him. He went up against Damascus, defeated the Syrians and thus took away the threat to Ahaz from these enemies. This

made Ahaz all the more caught in the snare of the devil. His next steps made it clear that he settled with the LORD. He would replace Him by what was attractive to him.

## **2Kgs 16:10-18 | Replacing the Altar of the LORD**

*10 Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw the altar which [was] at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the pattern of the altar and its model, according to all its workmanship. 11 So Urijah the priest built an altar; according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, thus Urijah the priest made [it], before the coming of King Ahaz from Damascus. 12 When the king came from Damascus, the king saw the altar; then the king approached the altar and went up to it, 13 and burned his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. 14 The bronze altar, which [was] before the LORD, he brought from the front of the house, from between [his] altar and the house of the LORD, and he put it on the north side of [his] altar. 15 Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering and the evening meal offering and the king's burnt offering and his meal offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land and their meal offering and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. But the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire [by]." 16 So Urijah the priest did according to all that King Ahaz commanded. 17 Then King Ahaz cut off the borders of the stands, and removed the laver from them; he also took down the sea from the bronze oxen which were under it and put it on a pavement of stone. 18 The covered way for the sabbath which they had built in the house, and the outer entry of the king, he removed from the house of the LORD because of the king of Assyria.*

Ahaz went to Damascus to greet his benefactor and protector, the king of Assyria. It seems that the place of meeting was the altar in Damascus. Ahaz was impressed by that altar. It was a *great* altar (verse 15). Possibly it was originally an Assyrian altar. Because he saw that the gods of Assyria had helped them, he wanted to have an altar like theirs, to secure the favor of these gods and sacrifice to them.

While he was still in Damascus, he sent a pattern of it to the priest Urijah. Urijah was a faithful man (Isa 8:2a), but also a man without a backbone. He had no strength to say no. He did as he had been told, and even quickly, so that the altar was ready before Ahaz had returned. When Ahaz is in Jerusalem again and saw the altar, he approached the altar and sacrificed on it. Verse 12 speaks emphatically about Ahaz as “king” (three times in this verse). There is a strong similarity with the first king Jeroboam and his altar (1Kgs 12:32-33). We have to conclude that Jeroboam and his altar service had now entered Judah.

The sacrifices Ahaz brought (verse 13), we know from Leviticus 1-7. It is remarkable that the sin offering was missing. It emphasizes that his service was only superficial worship. There was no sense of sin. He arranged everything as he saw fit. It was totally a self-willed religion. We also see this when he removed the bronze altar of burnt offering from the place where it belonged and instead replaced it with his own imitation altar (verse 14). The altar of Ahaz had to be central.

The altar of the LORD was not completely removed. The place where it stood was at a distance from its central position, so that it was reminder of the LORD’s service, but at a distance, as it were.

Ahaz determined that from then on the great altar, his altar, must be used to bring the prescribed sacrifices (verse 15). He ordered the priest Urijah to see to it that his instructions are followed. He dismissed the bronze altar of the LORD for sacrificial service to the true God. Instead, he made it a place where he could approach demons to seek their advice.

Ahaz’s drive for innovation knew no bounds. The next part of the old worship to be removed was the bronze sea that stood on twelve oxen. He cut off the borders of the stands, and removed the laver from them (verse 17). He also took down the sea from the bronze oxen. He shows his thinking (in this picture) that cleanliness is not necessary to be able to do service in the house of the LORD.

The oxen were not a decoration for the bronze sea, but formed the basis for cleansing. It is a picture that speaks of the fact that cleansing must be done on the foundation of the sacrifice of Christ. Oxen speak of His service

which He continually performs for us. That foundation is replaced by a stone floor, a foundation made by people.

Ahaz also demolished the covered way for the Sabbath, for his urge to modernize (verse 18). What exactly the covered way for the sabbath was is not clear. It is thought that there was a covered place in the temple, where the king sat on the sabbath during his visit to the temple. This may well be possible, because the removal of the covered way for sabbath was linked to the removal of “the outer entry of the king” (cf. 1Kgs 10:5; Eze 46:1-2). It shows his contempt for the sabbath – which speaks of the rest of God and His people – and the absolute unwillingness as king to be connected to the dwelling place of God. He refused to acknowledge that he could only be king if he acknowledged that God was his Lord.

He ordered the destruction of everything reminding of the service of the true God. All his actions meant the abolition of true service to God. He established a religion that was completely to his taste. That’s the tried and true method of disregarding what God had to say about it. It is important to ask God how He wants us to worship. For us, that means that we consult His Word in an attitude of submission to what He says.

It does not mean that our worship must always follow certain fixed patterns through standard formulations. The Holy Spirit will show us different aspects each time for which we can and want to worship God. There is no liturgy to be devised.

Someone rightly said: We should not play with our worship and cheer it up with interviews and entertaining performances. Remarkably enough, he added: “In the church I serve, our worship is carefully planned so that we never have the same thing on two consecutive Sundays.

When I read this, I couldn’t help but feel that the writer himself acted after Ahaz’s model, which he first (rightly) accused. Isn’t the Holy Spirit the only One Who can lead the worship of the church in such a way that every time worship is different, new and fresh, and that it still meets the ancient truths of God’s Word (cf. Jn 4:23-24)?

## **2Kgs 16:19-20 | Death of Ahaz**

19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 20 So Ahaz slept with his fathers,

*and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and his son Hezekiah reigned in his place.*

With the above, in this book, God has said everything about Ahaz to be said of him and what is useful for us to know. “The rest” was “written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah”. That “rest” cannot be darker than what God’s Spirit has told us in this chapter, but it can be more in detail. We don’t need to know those particulars. What we are told contains a severe warning not to turn to the world for help and not to follow our own ideas in serving God.

The last verse sheds a ray of hope to the people of God in this deeply dark period. That ray of hope was Hezekiah. God was preparing a revival by making a God-fearing son king instead of his godless father Ahaz.

## 2 Kings 17

### Introduction

This chapter describes the history of the Samaritans. After this chapter, the book continues with the kings of Judah. Most tribes of the north had already been taken away. The empire at that time was made up of only Samaria and the surrounding areas. Hoshea, who also came to power by murder, reigned over this part.

### 2Kgs 17:1-4 | Hoshea King Over Israel

*1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] nine years. 2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him. 3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. 4 But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as [he had done] year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison.*

We return to the Northern Kingdom, which came to an end in this chapter. It has been mentioned before that Hoshea became the new king of Israel (2Kgs 15:30). Also, we must say of him what is said of all the kings of Israel, that he did “evil in the sight of the LORD”. What follows is that he did not do as Jeroboam did, that is to say, worshipping the calves made by Jeroboam. It seems that this cannot be said of him because these calves had probably already been taken away (Hos 10:5). If someone doesn’t do a particular evil, it doesn’t mean he’s better. He may not have been able to do that evil.

King Hoshea was good at conspiracies. He had previously forged a conspiracy against Pekah to kill him and become king (2Kgs 15:30). Now he has forged a conspiracy with the king of Egypt, with whom he secretly sought support. The king of Assyria, however, discovered this conspiracy. Hoshea was captured and taken as a prisoner to Assyria. Another reason



for his imprisonment is that he had stopped paying tribute imposed on him by the king of Assyria. All this meant his downfall. The prophet Hosea also wrote about the downfall of king Hoshea (Hos 10:7; 11:5).

## 2Kgs 17:5-6 | Israel Carried Away Into Exile

*5 Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, [on] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

Not only was king Hoshea taken away in captivity, but the king of Assyria also invaded the whole land, besieged Samaria, captured it and carried the entire population of Israel away into exile to Assyria. This happened in the ninth year of Hoshea, which was the last year of his reign (verse 1). The people of God were brought into slavery and forced to serve a foreign king in a foreign country.

This was the inglorious end of a (part of a) people who once among another Hoshea, the son of Nun, that is Joshua (Num 13:2,8,16), had entered the land. Now they were unceremoniously carried away into exile from the land under king Hoshea, the son of Ela. The reason for this is explained in detail in the following verses.

In time, being placed to live in the midst of Gentiles, they would be absorbed by them. It would seem that Israel's name has disappeared from off the earth. But God keeps an eye on His people (cf. Jam 1:1; Acts 26:7). At the end of time He will bring back a remnant into his land of the tribes he had to disperse in His discipline (Isa 11:12; Deu 30:2-4; Psa 147:2; Isa 56:8).

During the reign of king Hoshea, the prophet Hosea also spoke of the glorious restoration of the northern realm, together with the kingdom of Judah. In Hosea 11 we hear that the Lord in His mercy says about them: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?" (Hos 11:8). In Hosea 13 the LORD says that He shall "ransom them from the power of Sheol" and "redeem them from death" (Hos 13:14). Also in Hosea 14 He speaks of His work in Israel and what He will be for them, that He will heal them and that He will be as dew for them (Rev 14:4-9). If we know this, the history of this chapter looks different indeed.

**2Kgs 17:7-23 | Reason for the Deportation**

7 Now [this] came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and [in the customs] of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. 9 The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set for themselves [sacred] pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11 and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations [did] which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. 12 They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets [and] every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." 14 However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and [went] after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. 16 They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, [even] two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17 Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. 18 So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. 19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. 20 The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight. 21 When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD

*and made them commit a great sin. 22 The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them 23 until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.*

God used Assyria as a disciplinary rod for His people. The direct reason for being carried away into exile by the king of Assyria was the uprising of king Hoshea. But the spiritual background are of course much more important and far-reaching. The spiritual background was the underlying reason for the exile, the justification for it, given in detail in the following verses.

The whole description makes it clear that God, on the one hand, had been very patient and, on the other hand, was finally forced to pass this judgment on His people. The historian reviews the entire history of God's people, not only of the ten tribes, but of all twelve tribes.

Many reasons for the exile are given, all of which are closely interrelated, why God has done this to His people. It occurred because they had sinned, not only during the reign of and by king Hoshea, but the Spirit of God directs us all the way back to the beginning of their history as people of God. From then until now, Israel's sin has accumulated. It all finds its origin in the worship of "other gods" (verse 7).

The veneration of other gods had led to walking "in the customs of the nations" (verse 8). This is mentioned as the first sin. We see here a picture of the development of professing Christianity. This had led to thinking of things "which were not right against the LORD their God" (verse 9). They made their own places to sacrifice God.

In those self-conceived and homemade places they sacrificed to idols (verse 11). We also know this in professing Christianity, where everything that takes us away from the true God is to be called idolatry. For this we are strongly warned (1Jn 5:21).

The next step was that people had surrendered themselves to other gods and began to serve them against the explicit prohibition of the LORD (verse 12; Exo 20:3-5). The LORD had given an explicit prohibition, and as well, had not left Himself without a witness about His will. He had "warned

Israel and Judah through all His prophets [and] every seer” to repent and to return from their evil ways and to observe His statutes again. Instead of listening, the people rejected the testimony of God. They despised God’s statutes, while keeping the statutes of the nations. Both His servants and His statutes were despised (verses 13-15).

To replace the worship in Jerusalem they had made two golden calves. They bowed down before them. They had even let their sons and daughters go through the fire. So they sold themselves to the devil. The purpose of all this was to badger and offend the LORD and to provoke Him (verses 16-17).

The result was that the LORD had become “very angry with Israel” and had cast them out of His sight. There was no tribe left, except Judah. Only a few of the other tribes had stayed behind in the land (verse 18).

The fact that Judah was the only tribe left was not a matter for Judah to congratulate themselves. In this whole enumeration of the sins of Israel, in a single verse (verse 19) something was also said about Judah. Judah would not do better. It was to prevent Judah from boasting that they were not as bad as the ten tribes. Such an attitude would be very inappropriate and very unjustified, because they followed Israel, albeit at a distance, in evil. They would even overtake Israel when it came to committing injustice. The result was that all Israel, the twelve tribes, were rejected by the LORD from before Him (verse 20).

The judgment of His people had in fact already begun with the tearing of the kingdom (verse 21). Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, preceded them on the way of departure from the LORD. It was a way that God’s Spirit describes here as a way in which “great sin” was committed. Jeroboam’s sin was general and also persistent. They did not depart from this (verse 22).

It is tragic that it must be said of the people of God, that they did not to depart from all the sins of Jeroboam. That means they have persisted. What a contrast with their attitude towards the LORD. It should have been that they would not have departed from the LORD by persevering in following Him.

In verse 23 the conclusion of all the sins of the people is listed. God keeps to what He has said, even if it is a word of judgment about unfaithfulness. All His servants, the prophets, had announced the judgment. Now it had come. “So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.”

The tribal bonds may have disappeared, but for the few there was always a path of faithfulness and faith that can be followed, and for God. That is true at all times. God always provides a remnant that goes the way of faith. So we see that in the time of Jeroboam faithful believers went to Jerusalem (2Chr 11:16). They only wanted to serve God at the true altar. They had literally separated themselves from the ten tribes.

Later Hezekiah sent out an invitation to all areas of the ten tribes to call those of God’s people from there to come to Jerusalem. Although the masses reacted negatively, some of the ten tribes responded to the call and came to Jerusalem (2Chr 30:11,18,25). It is also true for God’s people in our time that we must never give up hope that God will maintain the truth of the church as the one body of Christ. If only there is faith to accept this blessing.

There were also revivals in Samaria (2Chr 31:1; 34:6,9,21), so we don’t need to get the impression from this chapter that Samaria and the ten tribes came to an end. God still knows those in the ten tribes who were His. However, the main line in this chapter is sad.

## 2Kgs 17:24-28 | The New Inhabitants of Samaria

*24 The king of Assyria brought [men] from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled [them] in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities. 25 At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them. 26 So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, “The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them because they do not know the custom of the god of the land.” 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, “Take there one of the priests whom you*

*carried away into exile and let him go and live there; and let him teach them the custom of the god of the land.” 28 So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.*

In verse 24, the thread of history is taken up again. We see how the cities of Samaria were doing after having been carried away into exile. These cities have new inhabitants, people from other nations. Their character is the same as that of God’s people who lived there first, for they feared not the LORD either (verse 25). For this reason, the LORD sent lions among them.

A natural reason may be that the number of inhabitants was insufficient to populate the land, giving the wild beasts a chance to multiply (Exo 23:29). In any case, the hand of God was in it. He used lions to make these people remember that He was there and that they were in His land. The people who had come to live there were people who had nothing to do with God, they did not relate to Him. However, God did interfere with them. Because these people lived in His land, He sent a judgment. God is not only the God of the land of Israel, but also of the whole world.

The inhabitants of the Samaritan cities drew the right conclusion, but the solution to their problem was not correct. While God’s action was aimed at people asking for Him, they approached the king of Assyria instead. It was clear to him that the lions were sent because of the lack of knowledge of the God of the land. To change this, the king of Assyria commanded a priest to go there and “teach them the custom of the god of the land”.

The priest who was sent would undoubtedly be one of the priests of the golden calves, a priest of a mixed religion. This man introduced even more mixed worship among the new inhabitants of the cities of Samaria. What he taught the people of the land about the service of God was nothing but the observance of outward forms as he had done when he himself still lived there.

This terrible mixture is also seen in professing Christianity. Priests of the roman-catholic church have established a mixed religion all over the world. It is a mixture of truth and the world. People are driven by the sword into the water to be baptized. That is what made Europe Christian.

How much the name 'Christian' has become a hollow concept today, goes without saying for those who love and know God's Word.

### **2Kgs 17:29-33 | The Religion of the Samaritans**

*29 But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived. 30 The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves priests of the high places, who acted for them in the houses of the high places. 33 They feared the LORD and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile.*

In addition to the ritual worship of the God of Israel, each nation also remained faithful to their homemade gods. Outwardly they did what was appropriate for a faithful Israelite, assisted by an 'original' priest. Serving their own gods seemed to be perfectly compatible with the service to God as taught to them by the priest. This is what the roman-catholic church did, making pagan gods Christian, so that everyone could become their worshiper, still holding on to their own gods, albeit sometimes with other names.

### **2Kgs 17:34-41 | Disobeying the Word**

*34 To this day they do according to the earlier customs: they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances or the law, or the commandments which the LORD commanded the sons of Jacob, whom He named Israel; 35 with whom the LORD made a covenant and commanded them, saying, "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down yourselves to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them. 36 But the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, and to Him you shall bow yourselves down, and to Him you shall sacrifice. 37 The statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do forever; and you shall not fear other gods. 38 The covenant that I have made with you, you shall*

*not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. 39 But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.” 40 However, they did not listen, but they did according to their earlier custom. 41 So while these nations feared the LORD, they also served their idols; their children likewise and their grandchildren, as their fathers did, so they do to this day.*

Verse 34 seems to be another contradiction to the previous verses, where it says that they feared the LORD, and now it says that they feared not the LORD. However, it is not a contradiction. The first fear was only outwardly, while in verse 34 it is about fearing with the heart.

A true fear of the LORD, a fear with the heart, was not present among the people. The touchstone for true fear is whether there is obedience to what God has said in His Word. This obedience was completely absent from the inhabitants of the cities of Samaria. This is clearly stated in verses 34-40. In these verses, the importance of the Word is discussed in detail – “the statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment” (verse 37) – with the conclusion in verse 41.

The conclusion brings us into a next phase of the development of Samaria and the religion that was adhered to there. We find the same phase in the Gospels. There we find nothing about the Samaritans carrying out idol worship. The Samaritans believed in the five books of Moses and served God on Mount Gerizim. However, it was a religion that had its roots in what we find here.

In what the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, we hear how He judged the service: “You worship what you do not know” (Jn 4:22a). Samaritans worshipped what they did not know. The Samaritans had the Scriptures in their hands, in which it is written that the LORD dwells in Jerusalem and that He wants to be worshipped there. The woman knew that and yet she said that “our fathers worshipped in this mountain” that is Mount Gerizim. Contrary to the clear statements of God’s Word, the Samaritans had their own place of worship with a form they had devised themselves.

In church history we have such a development. What we see in the Samaritans, we see repeated in Protestantism, where the Word has been recaptured from roman-catholicism and idolatry has been dealt with. But that is



not enough to reach the final station. There is something more to come. It is about taking the true place of worship. This can only be made known by the Prophet, the Lord Jesus. He Himself is that true place.

What the Samaritans and professing Christianity need is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God Who can speak of the Father. Whoever comes into contact with Him is also made aware of the true place of worship. That place is not geographically defined, like Jerusalem, but is spiritual in nature. It is about worship "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24), that is: worship must be done in a spiritual and true way. This means that a completely different position has to be taken than the one used in Samaria at the time of the exile.

The contradictions between Jews and Samaritans were great. The Jews despised the Samaritans, but the Lord Jesus did not. For us, that spells a warning. If by grace we may worship the Father in spirit and truth in the place where the Lord Jesus now dwells, that is where the church meets (Mt 18:20). We may not despise others who go to a place that is not in accordance with the Word. It is pride to know the true place of worship and to look down with contempt on those who do not know this place. Wherever this attitude is found, the Lord disappears from the midst. He cannot be in a place where there is pride. That is where the spirit of Laodicea reigns. There He stands outside, at the door (Rev 3:14-20).

What we read about the Samaritans here, in 2 Kings 17, is not the last thing we hear from them. "To this day" means to the day of the historian. It has already been pointed out previously that in John 4 the Lord Jesus spoke to a woman from Samaria about the highest service of the believer or the purpose of the life of the believer: the worship of the Father.

We see something like that in Luke 17. There a Samaritan cleansed of his leprosy found the true place of worship: at the feet of the Lord Jesus (Lk 17:15-16). Following these two examples, we can say that a sister, in John 4, and a brother, in Luke 17, have found this place of worship.

In the familiar parable of the good Samaritan, the Lord Jesus compares Himself to a Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). At the end He asks: 'Who shows himself to be a neighbor of others?' The answer is that our neighbor is the one who comes to help us in our need. Our neighbor is not one to whom we must show love, but a neighbor is the one who takes care of us. This means

that we see ourselves in the man who fell into the hands of robbers and that we are dependent on someone who wants to be our neighbor. The Lord Jesus became the Neighbor for us. Do we want to take the neighbor's place in relation to Him and be dependent on His grace?

## 2 Kings 18

### Introduction

The beginning of the last part of 2 Kings is about the history of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. This history is mainly determined by the kings Hezekiah and Josiah. The LORD has provided a period of revival by each of them.

The history of Hezekiah can be found three times in Scripture: in 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32 and Isaiah 36-39. The fact that his history is told three times does not mean that we read the same story three times. It is not just a repetition. The history in Isaiah largely corresponds with what we find here, but in 2 Chronicles it is often different. In 2 Chronicles the priestly side is described, while here we have the historical events. In Isaiah history is described from a prophetic perspective.

In 2 Chronicles it is mainly about the restoration of the temple and the celebration of the Passover. Both events take place in the early days of the reign of Hezekiah. In 2 Kings and Isaiah it is more about events that take place in the second half of his reign.

In Isaiah, this history gets its prophetic meaning. Isaiah 36-39 closes the first part of the book, with Assyria as the great enemy. This is also what will happen in the end time. The extermination of the king of Assyria, the king of the north, will be done by the LORD Himself, the Lord Jesus. Thereby He will deliver His people and thereafter the people will be in the realm of peace under the rule of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. The direct lesson is that there can be trust in the Lord Jesus in the most difficult circumstances.

### **2Kgs 18:1-8 | Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah**

*1 Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He*

*removed the high places and broke down the [sacred] pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor [among those] who were before him. 6 For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. 7 And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.*

Only a few years after Hezekiah became king, the ten tribes were carried away into exile from the land of Israel. What remains is the history of the two tribes. As has already been mentioned, the two tribes took no notice of the warning of judgment by what had happened to the ten tribes. Nevertheless, it took some time before the curtain also fell on them and they were taken away into exile. The two tribes continued to be the object of God's grace for quite some time. We get to see some special evidences of that grace from the period of time that the two tribes remained in the land.

The first proof is that God gave Ahaz, an ungodly king, a God-fearing son, Hezekiah. In this we see God's care for a remnant. The name of Hezekiah's mother is mentioned. She was called Abi, which means 'my father'. She knew in the LORD a Father who helped her to raise her son Hezekiah, in the fear of the LORD, a fear that was completely lacking in Ahaz.

Hezekiah was a king upon whom the LORD looked down with joy, and who reminded him of David, the man after His own heart. The first acts of Hezekiah's reign to be noted were things concerning idolatry. He took away and destroyed what had seized the hearts of the people, and by which the LORD was forgotten and despised. This included the bronze serpent, which was once a blessing by the grace of God. It had been a God-given means for everyone who had been bitten by a poisonous serpent, to be healed when he looked at it (Num 21:9).

That is not to say that the bronze serpent gave healing. A person was healed only when he looked at the serpent in obedience to what God had said. So someone only looked if he believed in what God had said. However, the

bronze serpent had become an object of worship instead of God. As if the bronze serpent, that piece of metal, had given salvation.

It can also be the same with wearing a cross. The cross brings salvation to anyone who believes that Christ died there for him (Jn 3:14-16). But whoever wears a wooden cross and pays homage to it, shows that for him this cross is a mascot. That must be destroyed. This is also what Hezekiah does with the Nehushtan. He shatters this idolatrous image.

The strength of Hezekiah's actions lay in his faithfulness. Verses 5-6 give an impressive testimony to this. There we read that "he trusted in the LORD" in a way that was unique "among all the kings of Judah". He "clung to the LORD", another beautiful expression. "He did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses."

His whole manner of life bears witness of his faithfulness to the LORD, submitting himself to what the LORD had said to Moses. The word that the LORD had spoken many centuries before, was for Hezekiah the absolute measure for his behavior. The same applies to us. We, who also live in an end time, are reminded of "the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior [spoken] by your apostles" (2Pet 3:2; Jude 1:17).

It should come as no surprise then that we read of Hezekiah that "the LORD was with him" and that "wherever he went he prospered". Because he trusted in God, he put an end to the alliance with the king of Assyria. Every human support is a denial of trust in the LORD. The consequence of breaking off his contacts with the king of Assyria was that he defeated the Philistines. The Philistines were allies of Assyria and were a great threat to Israel because of their claim to the land.

## 2Kgs 18:9-12 | Israel Carried Away Into Exile

*9 Now in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. 10 At the end of three years they captured it; in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured. 11 Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away into exile*

*to Assyria, and put them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant, [even] all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded; they would neither listen nor do [it].*

These verses repeat a part of the history of Israel and Hoshea (2Kgs 17:4-8). One possible reason is that the writer wanted to show the contrast between Hoshea and Hezekiah. Hoshea did not take the LORD into account, while Hezekiah fully trusted in the LORD. Israel did not listen to “all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded”, which Hezekiah followed exactly (verse 6).

### **2Kgs 18:13-16 | Hezekiah Pays Sanherib Tribute**

*13 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 14 Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 Hezekiah gave [him] all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king’s house. 16 At that time Hezekiah cut off [the gold from] the doors of the temple of the LORD, and [from] the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.*

The historian passes over ten years and takes us to the fourteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign. It seems that in the years that had passed, his confidence in God had slowly declined, so we must now hear that he was bowing before the king of Assyria who was threatening him. His trust in God seems to have disappeared.

Hezekiah became subject to the king of Assyria and forgot the LORD. He left the way of faith. When he said to the king of Assyria, “I have done wrong”, he was actually saying that his right way before the LORD was a wrong way. It is not the LORD Who was standing before him anymore, but he saw things in the light of the king of Assyria. It was a sin of Hezekiah to say so.

To buy off the threat, Hezekiah proposed to pay what the king of Assyria demanded from him. To pay for the sum determined, Hezekiah took all the silver of the temple and of his own treasures, an action due to lack of faith. Hezekiah also cut off the gold from the temple doors and doorposts to pay for what was imposed on him by the king of Assyria.

## 2Kgs 18:17-37 | Bluster Against the LORD

*17 Then the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rab-saris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah with a large army to Jerusalem. So they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they went up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway of the fuller's field. 18 When they called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, came out to them. 19 Then Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is this confidence that you have? 20 You say (but [they are] only empty words), '[I have] counsel and strength for the war.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? 21 Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, [even] on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 22 But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'? 23 Now therefore, come, make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 24 How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants, and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 25 Have I now come up without the LORD's approval against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"" 26 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah, said to Rabshakeh, "Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand [it]; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 27 But Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, [and] not to the men who sit on the wall, [doomed] to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?" 28 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, saying, "Hear*

*the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. 29 Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; 30 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." 31 Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, "Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die." But do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." 33 Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 35 Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'" 36 But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." 37 Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.*

The word "then", which begins with verse 17, makes it clear that the enormous tribute given by Hezekiah to the king of Assyria had been of no use. The king of Assyria continued to rob, even breaking the covenant Hezekiah had made with him. He sent high ranking officers with a large army to Jerusalem.

The place where the enemy gathered (verse 17b) was the place where Isaiah had previously met king Ahaz, Hezekiah's father (Isa 7:3). Isaiah had his little son with him on that occasion. There Ahaz was shown a way out, but he refused to accept it in faith. A promise was given at that place of water and a fuller's field. Water speaks of cleansing, and the fuller's field of washing of clothes. The name of the son of Isaiah, Shear-jashub, means 'a rest will repent'. There was also mention of the birth of the Messiah at this place. This is where the enemy came up with a message that put Hezekiah to the test.



Hezekiah sent a delegation to hear what the men of Assyria wanted (verse 18). It became a one-sided conversation. In verse 19, the commander began an impressive speech with much rhetoric. There was a lot of truth in this but also a lot of falsehoods. Everything he said was meant to frighten Hezekiah and the men of Judah.

He began by presenting the king of Assyria as “the great king”. The question in verse 20 is a penetrating and justified question. In verse 21 Hezekiah had to hear from the mouth of a heathen that his trust was not in the LORD, but in an earthly king. This was a correct and sad observation. Egypt was not to be relied on. The LORD himself compares Egypt to a broken reed (Eze 29:6-7).

But, the commander went on, that if Hezekiah would say that he trusted in the LORD, it also meant nothing (verse 22). Hezekiah may have taken away the high places, but what had that yielded? Had that brought any good to the people? Were they grateful for that? The commander tried to create discord between Hezekiah and the people, because the people were able to hear everything the commander said.

Another argument for breaking the resistance was to point out the weakness of Hezekiah’s army (verses 23-24); he had none to speak of. Hezekiah would not even be able to supply the horsemen for two thousand horses if the king of Assyria gave them to him.

Another argument to impress the men of Judah was a reference to a command from the LORD, for the commander to come up and destroy the land (verse 25). He said that without any faith, but at the same time there was truth in it, because the Assyrians were God’s rod of discipline for His people. This statement would turn against him, because while he said what was true, he did nothing to change his relationship with God.

It seems that the commander was silent for a moment to see how the people reacted to his words. Hezekiah’s delegation did react (verse 26), but without any resistance. They gave no sign of trust in the all-powerful God, the God of His people. Their reaction was one of fear. They did not want the people to have heard this, because it would only discourage them more. But that was precisely the intention of the commander.

The reaction elicited another tirade from the commander. Encouraged by what the delegation had said in their fear, he spoke to all the people who were there. They were exhorted to listen carefully to his words, otherwise, together with their leaders, they would feed themselves with their own excrements and quench their thirst with their own urine (verse 27). When he had painted this picture in front of them, the commander, in Judean and with a loud voice, started again with the representation of “the great king” (verse 28; cf. verse 19).

The people had to understand well that Hezekiah was a worthless and misleading king. Hezekiah was powerless, as was the LORD, to whom Hezekiah referred (verses 29-30). No, it was better for them to surrender to the king of Assyria. Instead of feeding on their excrement and quenching their thirst with their own urine, they would eat the delicious fruits of their own vine and fig tree and drink water from their own well (verse 31).

The commander, clever and misleading as he was, made it very attractive to surrender by presenting the country where he would lead God’s people, as the same as their own (verse 32). Faith would see immediately that that land was not the land of God; for his temple was not there, where He dwells. It all seemed to look beautiful, but the LORD was not there. Let us also hold on to what God has given and not exchange it for false promises.

The deeds he mentioned (verses 33-35) were right, but he committed folly to lower the LORD to an idol. He regarded the LORD as one of the idols of the other countries. This foolish and low view would therefore ultimately lead to his disgraced downfall.

The reaction of Hezekiah’s delegation to this second speech by the commander was one of silence (verse 36). They remained silent because Hezekiah had told them to. It is sometimes good and important not to respond to certain statements. Silence sometimes speaks more clearly and louder than speaking. Not that the mission was silent because of their faith. The threat had brought them into deep dismay. They tore their clothes and went to Hezekiah to tell him what the commander had said (verse 37).

## 2 Kings 19

### **2Kgs 19:1-5 | Hezekiah Sends Servants to Isaiah**

*1 And when King Hezekiah heard [it], he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. 2 Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth and there is no strength to [deliver]. 4 Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'" 5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.*

When the delegation had passed on the commander's words to Hezekiah, he tore his clothes. He also covered himself with sackcloth. He revealed a good mind, that of humility. He was not arrogant, but bowed under the judgment that came upon him. He knew what he had earned, and that the hand of the LORD brought this upon him. Therefore he went to Him to His house.

Furthermore he sent a delegation to Isaiah, with some people he first sent to the commander. Then he took refuge in the Word of God to ask what should happen. It is the example for us, to ask God by consulting His Word.

Hezekiah's need was brought to Isaiah. It was "a day of distress" because the enemy was lying in front of the gate of Jerusalem and there was no strength to fight the enemy. Powerlessness causes distress. It was also a day of "rebuke". Thus Hezekiah acknowledged that the distress of the enemy was a rebuke they deserved for their unfaithfulness to the LORD. Hezekiah also characterized the commander's words as "rejection".

Hezekiah continued his feelings in verse 4. But first he spoke in pictorial language about God's work in His people. He compared the situation of the people with a birth that presents itself, when there is no strength to give birth. There were birth contractions, but the children were not born,

so that the mother's life was threatened. There was in the people, in the person of Hezekiah, acknowledgment of unfaithfulness. Confession of unfaithfulness can be compared to the pain of a new birth (cf. Jn 16:21a). But it seemed that the birth would not progress. Hezekiah saw only distress and no salvation.

He no longer dared to speak of the LORD as 'my God'. For himself he saw that he had lost that right. But "perhaps" the LORD would listen to Isaiah. He spoke to Isaiah about "the LORD your God". He recognized the good relationship Isaiah had with the LORD. The reason for his request for prayer was not that he was personally offended or that the people were threatened, but that the enemy had dishonored the living God (cf. 1Sam 17:45). It was about the Name of God. Is that also our motivation when we ask something, or is it about our own honor?

The question to Isaiah was whether he wanted to send a prayer "for the remnant that is left". That makes this history applicable to the end time, when there will be a remnant that is in great need. It also applies to us, believers in an apostate Christianity, who (want to) be a remnant that focuses on the honor of the Name of God.

### **2Kgs 19:6-7 | Encouragement by Isaiah**

*6 Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."'"*

The servants of Hezekiah came to Isaiah as men who shared in the feelings of Hezekiah. They were therefore able to interpret them correctly. That was why they were given an encouraging answer. It was the promise of the people's deliverance and judgment on the king of Assyria. The LORD would ensure that the king of Assyria would hear something that would lead him to give up the siege of Jerusalem and return to his land. When he was back in his own land, the LORD himself would cut him down by the sword.

Here is the promise that judgment will come over the rod of discipline used by God to discipline His people (Isa 10:12). God shows that He was not only a God of Judah, but of all kingdoms. He is not a local God, but God of the whole earth. He made sure that this king would be killed in his own land in the midst of his own gods and thus shows His omnipotence.

### 2Kgs 19:8-13 | Assyria Wants to Impress Again

*8 Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 When he heard [them] say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has come out to fight against you," he sent messengers again to Hezekiah saying, 10 "Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? 12 Did the gods of those nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them, [even] Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who [were] in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and [of] Hena and Ivvah?"*

The commander made one last attempt to break the resistance of the people. It was an emergency attempt to subjugate the people in order to then go and fight Tirhaka. The rumor had reached him that he was attacking him. The commander once again used an argument that he had already used previously. That was to point out the achievements of the Assyrian kings, what they had done with other lands. He also pointed to the gods of those nations and their inability to deliver those nations of which they were the gods. Thus the commander, without saying it explicitly, compared again the LORD, the God of His people, with the idols of the nations. He stated that the LORD, like the idols, would not be able to deliver His people from the power of the king of Assyria.

### 2Kgs 19:14-19 | Hezekiah's Prayer

*14 Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. 15 Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God*

*of Israel, who are enthroned [above] the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 16 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. 17 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands 18 and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. 19 Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God."*

Hezekiah's response to the threats of the enemy was beautiful and imitable. Hezekiah once again resorted to the LORD. What he did is always God's great purpose in trials. It is also nice to see how he did it. He did not ask God for an answer to these letters for the king of Assyria, but for a solution for the content.

He spread out the letters containing all the threats to the LORD. He acquainted the LORD with its content. In this way, we may lay down all our needs before the Lord, one by one. We can mention by name all the things we care about.

Hezekiah acknowledged that God alone is God on earth. With that awareness he approached God. He first addressed God with the name "LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned [above] the cherubim". This beautiful name of God shows His connection with His people and that He rules. Hezekiah confessed Him as the only God, not only of Israel, but "of all the kingdoms of the earth". This is He because He is the Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore He is the Owner of it. No such thing is ever said of or to any idol. God is the God of the universe.

That almighty God can be approached and addressed and be moved to listen and see, Hezekiah begged him to pay attention to "the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God". We see that Hezekiah was not concerned about words spoken to him, but about what had been said to the living God, with what He had been dishonored and offended.

Hezekiah was not blind to what his enemy had done. It was all true what the enemy had said about peoples and their gods they had conquered. But

Hezekiah immediately acknowledged the reason. Of course the king of Assyria could conquer these gods, because they were only dead things of wood and stone, the work of human hands. You could just pick up such things and burn them or break them in pieces.

Hezekiah knew that despite all the achievements of the enemy, his God was above all. He alone was able to deliver and judge this enemy. Hezekiah asked the LORD for deliverance. He did not do this primarily for his own salvation, but that “all the kingdoms of the earth”, of which God is God (verse 15), will actually know that He “alone” is God” (verse 19).

### 2Kgs 19:20-34 | Prophecy of Isaiah

*20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard [you].’ 21 This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:*

*‘She has despised you and mocked you,  
The virgin daughter of Zion;  
She has shaken [her] head behind you,  
The daughter of Jerusalem!*

*22 ‘Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?  
And against whom have you raised [your] voice,  
And haughtily lifted up your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!*

*23 ‘Through your messengers you have reproached the Lord,  
And you have said, “With my many chariots  
I came up to the heights of the mountains,  
To the remotest parts of Lebanon;  
And I cut down its tall cedars [and] its choice cypresses.  
And I entered its farthest lodging place, its thickest forest.*

*24 “I dug [wells] and drank foreign waters,  
And with the sole of my feet I dried up  
All the rivers of Egypt.”*

*25 ‘Have you not heard?  
Long ago I did it;  
From ancient times I planned it.*

Now I have brought it to pass,  
 That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.  
 26 'Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength,  
 They were dismayed and put to shame;  
 They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb,  
 As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.  
 27 'But I know your sitting down,  
 And your going out and your coming in,  
 And your raging against Me.  
 28 'Because of your raging against Me,  
 And because your arrogance has come up to My ears,  
 Therefore I will put My hook in your nose,  
 And My bridle in your lips,  
 And I will turn you back by the way which you came.  
 29 'Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of  
 itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year  
 sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 30 The surviving remnant of the  
 house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. 31 For  
 out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors.  
 The zeal of the LORD will perform this. 32 'Therefore thus says the LORD  
 concerning the king of Assyria, "He will not come to this city or shoot an ar-  
 row there; and he will not come before it with a shield or throw up a siege ramp  
 against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall  
 not come to this city,"' declares the LORD. 34 'For I will defend this city to  
 save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"

Hezekiah himself prayed directly to God, but the answer came via Isaiah (verse 20). It was an exhaustive answer from the LORD. This answer applies to the end time.

The LORD began by mocking the power of the king of Assyria (verse 21). With God's word of mockery about the enemies, the people were united. They were also the words of the people, presented here as "the virgin daughter of Zion" and "the daughter of Jerusalem". These mocking words were put into the mouth of the remnant by the LORD. Only when the people really have the character of virgin and daughter they will be able to speak these words.



Here is a holy, a Divine mocking (cf. Psa 2:4). That's how we should learn to mock. Mocking is often an expression of the flesh or an expression of feelings of revenge. Feelings of gloating are also often present when we mock. None of this is present in the mockery of God and in divine mockery by His people.

The LORD took the insults of the king of Assyria very seriously (verse 22). How audacious it was to speak in this way to the Holy One of Israel! The LORD could only bring His wrath upon him.

The LORD knew exactly what the proud king had said and what he boasted (verses 23-24). Through Isaiah, He revealed the condition of the enemy's heart. It was pride that dictated his actions. He believed he could overcome the greatest powers of the world. He had indeed conquered a great deal, but in his pride he believed that he could also conquer God. The king of Assyria spoke as if he were God.

Then the LORD spoke to the conscience of the enemy (verse 25). Had it never occurred to him that he was only an instrument of God, and that he was only to carry out His will? The enemy was not able to do anything but what God intended long ago. *God* governs history, not the mighty men of the world. If those in power realized this, they would come to conversion and perform their duties in fear of God and for the good of their subjects. Therefore we are exhorted to pray for all who are in authority (1Tim 2:1-4).

God let the king of Assyria know that he could only overcome nations, because God had put them in his power (verse 26). In himself, he was like one of the peoples conquered by him. For him, the conquered peoples had become like grass, but he himself was no different from the same grass. "All who hate Zion" will "be put to shame and turned backward". They will "be like grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up" (Psa 129:5-6). This judgment also included the arrogant king of Assyria.

God knows the enemy through and through. For the believer, this awareness is an encouragement, and at the same time he has the desire to be known through and through himself, so that he may be totally to God's glory (Psa 139:1-3,23-24). For the unbeliever, that thought is intolerable.

The LORD will deal with the enemy without being able to resist (verse 28). The enemy will be removed by Him as an unwilling animal with means

which He will use for this purpose and which are in accordance with his pride.

In verse 29 Isaiah suddenly turned to Hezekiah. The sign Hezekiah received was a sign that God would not leave His people. The LORD would bless the fruit of the land again. There had been no opportunity to sow, but they would be able to eat what grew naturally. God would ensure that the people had enough to eat. In the third year they would have to start sowing again and be able to reap and eat the fruit of their land.

We can also apply this spiritually. Someone who has just been delivered from the power of sin, who has just been converted, does not know much yet, but the Lord will bless him richly. He gets all these blessings thrown into his lap, as it were, and is allowed to eat what is given to him in this way. But he must also read and study himself, he must sow himself and will also be allowed to reap. He goes looking for food himself. Ruth is an example of this (Rth 2:1-23).

The beautiful verses 30-31 are about the remnant. These verses correspond to what Isaiah said earlier: "Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God" (Isa 10:20-21). The mighty God is the Messiah (Isa 9:6). Here we see the connection between the events here and the future.

We must have this remnant character. Mighty enemies threaten us, but we are dependent on the Lord. We look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus. For us, He does not intervene by judging our enemies, but by taking us up from between our enemies to Himself.

The LORD concluded His answer to Hezekiah with the promise that the enemy would not enter the city. This promise was made repeatedly and in different ways in verses 32-34. The LORD did everything to convince Hezekiah of the certainty of deliverance. The main reason that the enemy would not get possession of God's city is that the LORD protected the city for His own sake and for His servant David's sake.

The LORD had chosen this city, it is His city to which His name is connected forever. The LORD also has chosen David his servant to be His king.

For the sake of the true David, the Man according to His heart, the Lord Jesus, God will in the future “defend this city to save it”. That salvation is given a pre-fulfilment in the following verses.

### **2Kgs 19:35-37 | Deliverance of Jerusalem**

*35 Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned [home], and lived at Nineveh. 37 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.*

Immediately after the LORD had promised to deliver Jerusalem, He fulfilled his promise. “That night” it happened. “The angel of the LORD”, that is the Lord Jesus, went to war. That night He killed no less than 185,000 enemy soldiers by an act of power. Thus, in the future, the Lord Jesus will come to earth to judge the enemy and to deliver His people.

Sennacherib’s answer was that he broke up camp and returned home. When he was worshiping before his god in the house of his god, he was killed with the sword by his sons. It is really touching, pathetic, to see how “the great king”, as he called himself, bowed down before a dead idol. He worshiped a piece of wood or stone to expect its help, despite the shameful retreat out of Judah. And it became even more slanderous when he, worshiping this piece of wood or stone to ask for help there, was killed. There was no movement in his idol to protect him. The idol stood there unmoved.

The death of Sennacherib occurred as God had predicted in verse 7b. God shows here that He is the God of the whole earth and stands above all gods. Similarly, the king of Assyria who will be there in the end time, will find his end by the power of God (Dan 11:45).

## 2 Kings 20

### **2Kgs 20:1-11 | Illness and Recovery of Hezekiah**

*1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" 2 Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3 "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 4 Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 "Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" 7 Then Isaiah said, "Take a cake of figs." And they took and laid [it] on the boil, and he recovered. 8 Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?" 9 Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?" 10 So Hezekiah answered, "It is easy for the shadow to decline ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps." 11 Isaiah the prophet cried to the LORD, and He brought the shadow on the stairway back ten steps by which it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.*

"In those days" (verse 1), that is, in the days of his distress because of the enemy from outside, Hezekiah became ill. He even got so ill that he was to die. Hezekiah therefore had a trial from outside, that is the enemy who had surrounded Jerusalem, and a trial from within, within himself. This second test came on top of the first and was even greater, because it concerned himself.

What happened to Hezekiah is a picture of the trials of the faithful remnant in the end time that also has an enemy from the outside and an enemy

from inside. Both enemies are death threatening, but the enemy inside is the worst. The enemy from within is someone from the people themselves, the antichrist.

Isaiah came to Hezekiah with the announcement that he would die and needed to arrange the affairs of his house for that purpose. For us, we must have our affairs arranged in view of the coming of the Lord. This can happen at any moment and that is why we must always be ready for it.

The announcement that he must die caused enormous sadness in Hezekiah. For an Old Testament believer, dying was very sad, especially while still relatively young, like Hezekiah, who was about forty years old at the time. For the promise of the LORD is a long life for being faithful to Him. That was what Hezekiah reminded the LORD. If he were to be taken away then, it would seem as if God were removing him because of his bad spiritual condition.

The LORD wanted Hezekiah to discover the power of death through what happened to him here. He also wanted him to discover the power of the resurrection. We see that the Lord always gives richer lessons than we perceive at first sight. Events that we think put an end to certain things are often not intended by God to take something away from us, but to give us something in addition: a greater view of His power.

When Hezekiah had poured out his grief to the LORD, Isaiah received a new message for Hezekiah. When the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, he was not even completely out of the door. As a result, he quickly returned to Hezekiah with the answer to his prayer.

Hezekiah received a wonderful answer from the LORD. Isaiah was to give him the answer on behalf of “the LORD, the God of your father David”. In this way the gaze was again focused on David as the picture of the Messiah. We notice seven blessings in the answer from the LORD.

1. The LORD had heard his prayer. We may also know that the Lord hears all our prayers.
2. The LORD had seen his tears. The Lord also knows our anguish and repentance for our sins.

3. The LORD told him that he would recover. God would take care of him and recover his health by letting him experience the power of the resurrection, as the following sentence shows. For us, every prayer that fits into His plan is answered by Him. It is not an incentive for anyone who is ill to claim recovery from the disease. Hezekiah had not claimed any health. He had revealed his need, and this was God's answer for him.

4. After the promise that he would recover, the LORD said that on the third day he would go to the house of the LORD. The power of the resurrection would make him go to the house of the LORD. For us it means that if we are aware that we have new life, we will take our place in the church.

5. The LORD promised him an extension of his life of fifteen years.

6. The LORD promised that he will be saved from the hand of the king of Assyria.

7. The LORD promised protection of the city. Hezekiah gained this protection because of Who the LORD is and because of the Messiah.

The answer to Hezekiah's prayer was not by a sensational miracle. A common, every day and tangible medicine was used for his healing that others had to apply for him. That medicine was a cake of figs. The result was that "he recovered".

In a spiritual sense figs are a picture of righteousness. Nathanael sat under the fig tree (Jn 1:48). The Lord Jesus said of him that he was an Israelite "in whom there is no deceit" (Jn 1:47). Nathanael and the fig tree give a picture of the faithful remnant that acts justly. A cake of figs is sweet. Knowing the sweetness of righteousness by behaving righteously brings recovery.

Hezekiah also asked for a sign. There seemed to be a certain lack of faith in what the LORD had said. That lack of faith was not 'punished' by leaving him in his illness with the accusation that he should have believed. This is often done by contemporary so-called faith healers. Instead, Isaiah gave him a choice of two kinds of signs. In this way God met Hezekiah's small faith.

In choosing one of the two signs we see that Hezekiah did have faith. He didn't question whether the signs Isaiah proposed to him were able to be given. He considered in faith which sign would be most obvious. In that

consideration, he chose the least obvious sign. The accelerated progression of time is not as impressive as putting time back. This was not about the time on a clock, where you can turn back the hands, but about the sun in the sky, that no man can reach, but only God.

When Hezekiah had made his choice, Isaiah cried to the LORD. Isaiah as well, did not doubt the outcome. Through his prayer God intervened with nature. All of nature was set back by the God of nature, to a position of ten steps back to help a believer believe in Him. The whole course and the whole order are in His hand. He can stop the sun and the moon (Jos 10:12-13) and also set them back, as He did here.

## 2Kgs 20:12-19 | The Delegation From Babylon

*12 At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. 14 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon." 15 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them." 16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD. 17 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 18 'Some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away; and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" 19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Is it not so, if there will be peace and truth in my days?"*

In verse 12 we hear about Babylon for the first time in the history of Israel. Babylon was still an insignificant city and far from being a world power. The king of Babylon had heard of Hezekiah's disease and healing. That was his reason to visit Hezekiah. However, the king of Babylon was not in-

terested in Hezekiah's disease. His visit had a political reason. He wanted to try to make Hezekiah his ally to fight with him against Assyria.

The visit became a trap for Hezekiah. He was flattered by this visit. Blinded by the impressive visit, he forgot the LORD. He showed the delegation from Babylon everything he had in his house, all his treasures. That must have made an impression on this delegation. Not a word did he mention about the LORD, and the miracle He did for him. He was silent about Him, Who took away the threat of death from him, and Whom he had come to know as the God of resurrection.

When Hezekiah had answered Isaiah's questions, Isaiah announced the judgment about all that Hezekiah had shown. He predicted that everything would be taken away and brought to Babylon. Not only things would be taken away, but also people. His descendants would be taken to Babylon to serve as officials of the king of Babylon. Here we hear the first announcement in Scripture about the exile of the two tribes to Babylon.

Hezekiah bowed down under this judgment, accepting that the LORD had done this. With a certain sense of gratitude, he expressed the thought that the judgment would not be meted out in his days.

## **2Kgs 20:20-21 | The Death of Hezekiah**

*20 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 21 So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son became king in his place.*

Hezekiah had been powerful. This power was "written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah", which is unknown to us. A special feature was that Hezekiah brought water into the city from the pool he had made and through the watercourse he had also made. In case of a siege, it was of vital importance to have a secure water supply. Hezekiah had taken care of that. Spiritually, it is also important to be able to take of God's Word, which is compared with water, in times of trial.

The extra fifteen years also came to an end when Hezekiah dies. This end, as with the other kings of Judah, was weaker than when he began. He was better able to deal with distress than with prosperity. He had been better



able to cope with illness than with health. Illness and distress had driven him to the LORD. His health and prosperity had led him to forget the LORD.

## 2 Kings 21

### **2Kgs 21:1-9 | Manasseh King of Judah**

*1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." 5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking [Him to anger]. 7 Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. 8 And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them." 9 But they did not listen, and Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel.*

The God-fearing Hezekiah is followed after his death by his godless son Manasseh. Manasseh was only twelve years old when he began to reign (verse 1). His reign lasted no less than fifty-five years, a period exceeding that of all the other kings. It is one of the enigmas of God's government that He allowed such a wicked man as Manasseh to rule over His people for so long.

The name of his mother is also given. Hephzibah means 'My lust is in her'. In that name we hear what Jerusalem means to the LORD. What kind of woman she was, is not told. Whether she was a good or a bad mother, we do not know. Judging by the development of Manasseh, she certainly

could not prevent him from developing into such an ungodly king. We cannot point to a cause for all time when children go against what their God-fearing parents have told them.

Manasseh did not take his father Hezekiah as an example, but followed in the ways of the kings of Israel, of whom we have read over and over again, what is said here of Manasseh, that they did “evil in the sight of the LORD” (verse 2). He did “according to the abominations of the nations”.

He quickly undid his father’s reforms and “he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed” (verse 3). He was also inspired by Ahab, the most godless king of Israel. It is quite possible that his worship and serving of sun, moon and stars (“all the host of heaven”) came through Assyrian influence. So we see that Manasseh adopted the worst of everything and everyone and put it into practice. The judgment that God had given both to the nation and to Ahab didn’t matter him at all.

That the wicked Manasseh seemed to be able to do unhindered whatever it took also says something about the people. The revival under Hezekiah had apparently not rooted deeply in the population. The people were easily carried away on the bad road where Manasseh was leading them.

He openly provoked the LORD by building idol altars in the house of the LORD (verses 4-5). The greatness of this evil is clearly expressed by saying that Manasseh did this in the house “of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My name””. Manasseh didn’t care about that. He ignored the rights of the LORD to His house and just made it a dwelling place for demons. Manasseh didn’t act out of ignorance concerning the will of the LORD, but he didn’t care at all about that will.

His whole performance shows his voluntary surrender to demonic powers (verse 6). This showed in him sacrificing his children to the devil, engaging in occultism – he practiced witchcraft and used divination – and stimulating all forms of sorcery – he appointed mediums and spiritists. The conclusion is that he did not ‘only’ ignore the LORD. It was much worse. Not only did he pass by the LORD with contempt, but he intentionally acted in this way to defy the LORD: “He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking [Him to anger].”

Verse 7 gives another example of his gross violation of the rights of the LORD and his defiance of Him. Even more emphatically than in verse 4 we hear the indignation of God about Manasseh's shameless courage to set the carved image of Asherah in the temple. We hear God's indignation in what He said of His house and of His city. God's feelings about where He had chosen to put His Name forever were deeply offended by Manasseh's contemptuous actions.

In verse 8 the LORD continued, in connection with verse 7, to speak about what He would have liked to do. He had wanted to put His Name forever among a people whom He would never drive out of this land, if they at least listened to His law. And there it went wrong: "But they did not listen" (verse 9). They followed Manasseh and wandered in a way that made them sin worse than the heathen peoples who first had lived in the land. There was now a godless mass of people, so soon after we had seen the history of a faithful remnant during Hezekiah's reign.

Even now, professing Christianity has been more corrupted by people than any other faith, just as Israel here was committing more sin than the gentile nations around them. That is why God's judgment over professing Christianity will be all the more severe.

## **2Kgs 21:10-16 | The LORD Announces Judgment**

*10 Now the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying, 11 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who [were] before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols; 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am bringing [such] calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. 13 I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. 14 I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies; 15 because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger since the day their fathers came from Egypt, even to this day.'" 16 Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to*

*another; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.*

Because of all the wickedness of Manasseh and his perseverance in it, the LORD had to announce judgment. He did so “through His servants the prophets.” The contents of His words are in verses 11-15. God did not remain silent and sent His warnings. When the judgment, to be carried away by Babylon, did come, no one could say that he did not know.

Verse 11 first gives a summary of the sins of Manasseh. In this summary he is emphatically called “king of Judah”. He should have appreciated that he was king of Judah. Judah means ‘God lover’. Manasseh had overlaid this name with the greatest shame. He committed atrocities, even putting the deeds of the pagan Amorites in the shade. By his wrong example he made Judah sin.

There is an announcement in verses 12-14, of what the LORD would do as punishment for these sins, while verse 15 gives the reason for the punishment. The judgment that the LORD would bring over Jerusalem and Judah would astonish those who hear of it. The standard set for judgment was the same as the one the LORD had set for Samaria and the house of Ahab. God is perfectly righteous in His judgment. He doesn’t measure by double standards.

By this judgment there would be nothing left of Jerusalem. The city would be like a dish wiped clean and turned upside down (verse 13). The LORD would withdraw from the remnant of His inheritance and give it into the hands of their enemies. He would no longer be involved with them and leave them to their fate. For this fate they had chosen themselves. The “remnant of My inheritance” (verse 14) refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who had not perished in a previous judgment. So this was not about the faithful remnant, but who remained after the first judgment.

Many of the remnant who had lived in the days of Hezekiah were killed by Manasseh. According to tradition, Manasseh ordered Isaiah to be “cut into pieces” (Heb 11:37). He would have committed this terrible murder with a wooden saw. We also live in days comparable to the days of Manasseh. If we want to be faithful to the Lord and His Word, we must count on being

persecuted (2Tim 3:12) and we will have to be willing to pay dearly for our faithfulness.

### **2Kgs 21:17-18 | Death of Manasseh**

*17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh and all that he did and his sin which he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son became king in his place.*

The brief previous description of all the atrocities of Manasseh is all that the author of 2 Kings had to say. We read nothing about his conversion in this account, as is reported in 2 Chronicles 33 (2Chr 33:10-20). We only read here about his government, about his responsibility, how he ruled. In the books of Chronicles we read about the grace of God.

### **2Kgs 21:19-26 | Amon King of Judah**

*19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name [was] Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. 21 For he walked in all the way that his father had walked, and served the idols that his father had served and worshiped them. 22 So he forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. 23 The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house. 24 Then the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place. 25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 26 He was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son became king in his place.*

After the wicked Manasseh, who had ruled for a long time, came his son Amon, another wicked king. These two kings ruled between two God-fearing kings. Grace is not an inheritance, one cannot demand it. Grace is given by God without reason in man.

In the description of Amon's reign, the full emphasis is on the fact that Amon completely followed his father Manasseh in his wickedness: "He

walked in all the way that his father had walked” (verse 21). That is worse than “not walk in the way of the LORD” (verse 22). He did this as a conscious choice, because we read that he “forsook” the LORD. Forsaking is leaving consciously. The LORD is called here “the God of his fathers”. He turned his back on everything God had been to his fathers, thinking especially of David and Hezekiah in the first place.

The LORD allowed his father Manasseh to reign for fifty-five years. In all his godlessness He did not intervene. That does not mean that everyone can do what he wants. Amon received a quick judgment. After only two years reign, he was murdered by his servants.

The people of the land, the hard-working people, killed Amon’s killers. They then made his son Josiah, king in his stead. They took the law into their own hands. Somehow they wanted a king from David’s house to remain in power. Possibly they acted, because a small part of the good influence of a converted Manasseh was still present in them. In any case God used it to place Josiah, whom He would use as a special instrument for a last revival among His people, as king on the throne of David. God controls everything, including the autocratic actions of population groups, to fulfill His plan.

## 2 Kings 22

### **2Kgs 22:1-2 | Josiah King of Judah**

*1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name [was] Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 He did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.*

Josiah was only eight years old when he started reign. His mother's name is mentioned: Jedidah, which means 'darling'. She was the daughter of Adaiah, which means 'the LORD is a jewel'. The place Bozkath was one of the cities of Judah (Jos 15:21,39).

The general characteristics of Josiah is read in verse 2. There was nothing present in him of the godless characteristics of his father Amon and his grandfather Manasseh. On the contrary, he did what was right in the sight of the LORD and went "in all the way of his father David". He went without deviating to the right or left. There is always the danger for a believer of deviating to the right, which stands for legalism, or to the left, which stands for liberalism. Only dependence on the Lord can save us from deviation to either side.

### **2Kgs 22:3-7 | Money for the Restoration of the Temple**

*3 Now in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam the scribe, to the house of the LORD saying, 4 "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest that he may count the money brought in to the house of the LORD which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. 5 Let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages of the house, 6 to the carpenters and the builders and the masons and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7 Only no accounting shall be made with them for the money delivered into their hands, for they deal faithfully."*



As we see with all the other good kings, Josiah's first acts of his reign involved care for the temple. He ordered the temple to be restored. His first concern was God's house, which had fallen into decay during the reign of Manasseh and Amon. He ordered Shaphan the writer, to tell the high priest Hilkiah that he should use the money that was in the house of the LORD for repairs.

Josiah had a loyal and dedicated helper in Shaphan, who had some sons and a grandson who were faithful men just like him (Jer 26:24; 29:3; 36:10; 40:5). This offspring had had a positive influence. They were God-fearing sons. So it was possible to be a God-fearing family in a godless time. For the sake of completeness it should also be mentioned that he had a son who became an idolater (Eze 8:9-11).

The money had to be given to those who carried out the work. They could then buy the necessary materials. They were able to do that without 'presenting every receipt'. It is always good to give in confidence, trusting that the person to whom it is given is acting well. This does not mean that accountability can be refused. Control is often good. Control does not take place out of mistrust, but because there is always the possibility of error. Trust should not be demanded, but should be given.

## 2Kgs 22:8-11 | The Book of the Law Found

*8 Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan who read it. 9 Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD." 10 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes.*

After the historian has told about the order to restore the house of God, he wrote about finding "the book of the law in the house of the LORD". That was what his report emphasized. What followed was the effect on Josiah's

heart and conscience by what was written in the book of the law. The revival of Josiah was ignited by finding the Word of God.

It should be noted that the discovery of the book of the law was connected with the care for the temple. In a spiritual sense, we can apply the principle that we will discover God's Word, that is, its meaning, if our hearts go out to what is now God's house, His church. When our heart is in line with God's heart, the right mind is present to be taught by God from His Word.

We do not know what this book of the law that they find was. It may have been the five books of Moses or only the book Deuteronomy. That is not important. What matters was the effect of that find. It was a great grace from God that He gave His Word back to His people, as it were. It was mentioned that Hilkiah said he had "found" the book of the law, which did not mean he searched for it. God took care he found it.

When it was found, the Word began its unstoppable run (cf. 2Thes 3:1). Hilkiah, the high priest, had found it, he gave it to Shaphan, who went to read in it and then went with the book of the law to the king. Once there, he first reported on his original mission with regard to money. After this there is no further mention about the work on the temple. All attention was focused on the Word and the effect of the Word.

After the report about the money, Shaphan told the king about the book of the law he had received from Hilkiah. He didn't hand it over to the king as an antiquity, to marvel at it, but he read it to the king because of current events, to be addressed by it. The Bible is best honored when we read it faithfully, study it, and incorporate into our hearts what we read and practice what the Lord says to us.

We see that with Josiah. The effect God's Word had on him was impressive. He was seized by it or even better, he was overwhelmed by it. He was not only smitten by the Word, but he was overcome by it. Josiah did not wonder if it was the Bible, if it was true. He did not argue, but the Word worked in him. He accepted it, "not [as] the word of men, but [for] what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1Thes 2:13).

Perhaps the opposite is more the case with us. We do not have to search for a Bible. Often we have several Bibles, in different translations and different

languages, at our fingertips, but often we don't treasure when we read in it. When Josiah discovered the Bible, he made a great discovery, he "finds great spoil" (Psa 119:162). It tore his heart. As a sign of his inner dejection he tore his clothes (cf. Joel 2:13).

It is to be hoped that we will experience this every time we read in God's Word. That is possible! We can pray that the Lord will show Himself and His will to us in His Word. If He sees that sincere desire with us and also that we will be humbled when He reveals our flaws to us, He will show Himself and His will.

### 2Kgs 22:12-20 | The Word of the LORD

*12 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." 14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her. 15 She said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 thus says the LORD, "Behold, I bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, [even] all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. 17 Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched.'" 18 But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD thus shall you say to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "[Regarding] the words which you have heard, 19 because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD. 20 "Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not*

*see all the evil which I will bring on this place.””” So they brought back word to the king.*

Josiah did what every soul does who in truth is convinced of his sins and therefore fears for judgment. Someone who really discovers that he is a sinner will turn to God to ask Him what to do. Every person who is touched by the Word of God and sees what he is in the eye of God, has that question. The Word brings us into the arms of God.

Whoever lives through the Word also knows the value and especially the practice of prayer. Josiah wanted to know from the LORD if there was still hope. He sought that hope with Him Who also has to bring judgment. There was no moderation at all with Josiah. He brought his need to the LORD by acknowledging that he and the people had earned judgment. He left it with the LORD how He would answer.

Josiah sent reliable men to Hulda. It is not clear why he sent them to a woman, the prophetess Huldah, and not to Jeremiah or Zephaniah, who acted as prophets in his days. Possibly they were still too young and unknown. He knew the prophetess Huldah. The fact that he went to a prophetess at least marks the time of decay, as in the time of Deborah's performance, when decay was also great (Jdg 4:1-9).

The name of her husband was explicitly mentioned by also giving the name of his father and grandfather. Hulda's profession, that he was keeper of the wardrobe, i.e. of the priestly clothes is also mentioned. He took care of the priests' garments. In the spiritual sense this means that he supervised the behavior of the believers, whether they are in accordance with their confession.

Huldah knew God's thoughts regarding God's people's life practices. A prophet or prophetess speaks utterances of God with a view to current situations. Such a person can apply the Word to it. Josiah also experienced this through the message she had for him.

Huldah needed to speak about Josiah on behalf of the LORD as "the man" and not as "the king". For the LORD, all the dignity Josiah had as king was not as important as it was about His judgment. Huldah is told by the LORD what He wanted to say to Josiah and what she had to pass on. It started with a repetition of what Josiah had heard read aloud and what

had brought him to dejection. For the third time we hear the announcement of God's punishment of His people. What Hulda said is nothing but repeating what God's Word said.

Then a word for Josiah personally followed. That personal word was addressed to him as "the king of Judah". It was a word of encouragement. The reason for this was his humiliation which the LORD had noted. The LORD saw this humbling in his heart and He had also observed the outer characteristics of the tearing of his clothes and tears.

We read of Josiah's father Amon, that he did not humble himself before the LORD (2Chr 33:21-23). His father Manasseh had humbled himself, but was forced to do so because of his own sins. Josiah did not humble himself because of his own sins, but because of a common guilt. He humbled himself over the sins of the people and of his fathers. He made himself one with them.

The encouragement was that the LORD would gather him to his fathers and to his grave in peace. He would see nothing of the calamity that the LORD was going to bring on Jerusalem.

The men he sent to Huldah reported to him on what the LORD had told Huldah. We see the effect in the next chapter.

## 2 Kings 23

### **2Kgs 23:1-3 | The Covenant**

*1 Then the king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. 2 The king went up to the house of the LORD and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. 3 The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all [his] heart and all [his] soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.*

Neither the message of judgment concerning Jerusalem nor the reassuring message concerning himself led to passivity with Josiah. As far as the message of judgment was concerned, he could have thought that it did not make sense to bring change anyway. As for the reassuring message, he could have been satisfied and thought that he would see it out. But no, both messages brought him to action.

He made the elders of Judah and Jerusalem come to him. He wanted to wake them up from their false rest and put them into action. The upcoming judgment made him extra zealous. He worked hard to implement the necessary reforms. He was not saying that it made no sense because everything would be destroyed anyway. The certainty that we will not come into judgment will not make us passive, but all the more zealous to reach people with the gospel. It will also increase our commitment to the Lord and His church.

When the elders were with him, they all went to the house of the LORD, the temple, the place where the book of the law was found. Not only did the elders go with him, but the “all the people, both small and great”. It had become a national matter. Before this whole company Josiah read “all

the words of the book of the covenant". He wanted the people to hear the words that so convicted him.

Nothing is more important to us than passing on God's Word (cf. 1Tim 4:12-13). It is important that we do so as people who have themselves been challenged by it and also live by it. Otherwise the Word will not spread – although God is sovereign to let it do its work in heart and conscience of one or another.

When Josiah had read the book of the covenant, he made a covenant between the people and the LORD. Although the revival was not lasting, as the book of Jeremiah shows, Josiah did make this covenant. Perhaps many joined this covenant because at that time they were very impressed by the Word, without their conscience having been touched. But although the majority may not really have been touched inward, as is often the case, there were a few in the masses who were convicted.

That is why we speak to all people, although perhaps only a few really listen. The Lord Jesus spoke of this situation in the parable of the sower (Mt 13:1-9,18-23). Every soul that we can still gain for God from the apostate world, makes every effort a valuable thing and worthwhile.

## 2Kgs 23:4-14 | The Cleansing

*4 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 5 He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven. 6 He brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and ground [it] to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people. 7 He also broke down the houses of the [male] cult prostitutes which [were] in the house of the LORD, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah. 8 Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high*

places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he broke down the high places of the gates which [were] at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which [were] on one's left at the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers. 10 He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech. 11 He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which [was] in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. 12 The altars which [were] on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down; and he smashed them there and threw their dust into the brook Kidron. 13 The high places which [were] before Jerusalem, which [were] on the right of the mount of destruction which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. 14 He broke in pieces the [sacred] pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones.

In verses 4-20 the cleansing is described in detail. Josiah started and continued to get rid of everything that was not good. And what a lot that was! There was an abundance of wickedness in Judah and Jerusalem, that is, in the area where one should be most familiar with God. Josiah had reigned for 18 years now and had set a good example to the people. Yet the depth and extent of the dunghill of the idolatry was enormous.

Josiah was not discouraged by the enormous amount of uncleanness to be cleared up. Every idol was to the LORD's gross dishonor and had to be eradicated. The work was going slowly. A lot of cleansing was required to be done thoroughly. Thorough cleansing is often difficult. A revival is not possible without cleansing. Cleansing is not just about the visible things. Visible things arise from the inner being. Above all, it is about an inner cleansing, a cleansing of the heart.

We need a renewal of our thinking. Cleansing our thinking means above all that we examine how we think. Our children go to school and their



thinking is shaped by the thinking of the world. The world determines how they see everything. Parents are also influenced, especially by mass media. It is through this channel that the opinion of the world is forced upon them. We can only keep ourselves clean of it if we do not take it in. If we sometimes take things to us from the world, let us then make up our mind not to take up things that defile us. Daniel is an example of this (Dan 1:8-16). This is only possible if we have a heart in which the Word of God dwells richly (cf. Col 3:16a).

The first task Josiah gave was to discard everything that had been brought into the temple relating to Baal (verse 4). First of all, we must consider what things of the world are permitted in the temple of today, that is, the church and our body, our thinking. Josiah gave this order to “Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers”. Cleansing is primarily a priestly activity. If uncleanness has entered our lives, it is above all at the expense of our service to God. He will no longer receive from our hearts and lives what He is entitled to and desires.

Josiah orders the objects sacrificed to the idols to be burnt. This event was in Jerusalem, the city of God. The remains of these objects were brought to Bethel, a place in the Northern Kingdom. This meant that he brought the ashes to an unclean place.

The three idols mentioned here, Baal, Asherah and all the host of heaven, were seen as a picture of prosperity. That makes today’s application easy. After all, we live in a time of idolization of prosperity. We can sometimes check ourselves to see if we really only give God the honor in all things, or if we are committed to get as much of the cake of prosperity as possible.

He also deposed the idolaters “whom the kings of Judah had appointed” (verse 5). The kings of Judah undoubtedly mean Manasseh and Amon. The idol priests sacrificed on the high places in Judah and around Jerusalem. They would have thought in their folly to sacrifice incense to the LORD. There were also exclusively idol priests, who brought incense to the Baal and other idols. Josiah also removed them.

The next action concerned the Asherah (verse 6), which Manasseh had placed in the house of the LORD (2Kgs 21:7). Here Josiah did a very thorough job. First he burnt it and then ground [it] to dust. The place of action

was the brook Kidron. Then he threw the dust on the graves, an unclean place. By throwing the dust over the graves he also expressed his contempt for this god. Perhaps when we think of “the graves of the common people” we have to think of a kind of mass grave, where people are buried together because they could not afford their own grave.

The horrific defilement knew no bounds. In verse 7 there was talk of dwellings made in the house of the LORD for prostituting men. The most disgusting sexual acts were performed in God’s house. The women also played their role in this horrific scene. They wove hangings for Asherah, the goddess of lust. Instead of denouncing these atrocities, they have, as it were, covered up these horrific practices with their hangings.

Then Josiah commands all the priests in his entire area, from Geba in the north of Benjamin to Beersheba in the south of Judah, to come to him (verse 8). These priests are taken away from their defiled environment. He defiled the high places where those priests had brought incense. The high places of the gates were broken down. A precise specification of the location of these high places is given: “At the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which [were] on one’s left at the city gate.”

The priests called to Jerusalem by Josiah could offer there on the altar of the LORD (verse 9). However, they were allowed to eat unleavened bread with their brothers. They were in a situation similar to that of priests who, due to a physical defect, cannot participate in the service, but are allowed to eat from the holy place (Lev 21:17,22-23). Sometimes it is the case that someone who comes to conversion cannot do a certain service because of the life he has led. For example, a person who has two women, as occurs in certain countries, cannot be an elder after his conversion (1Tim 3:2).

He was always working. His work in verse 10 was the extermination of yet another unparalleled horror: the sacrifice of parents’ own children to Molech, the god of fire (cf. Jer 32:35). This happened in Topheth, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, which because of these practices was called “the valley of Slaughter” by the LORD (Jer 19:6). How terrible this place was, is clear from the fact that the name Hinnom is derived from the name ‘Gehenna’, which is ‘hell’.

Josiah defiled this place so that no one could offer his son or daughter through the fire anymore as a sacrifice for Molech. In this verse there is a strong call to parents to think about the purpose of raising their children and protecting them from evil.

The horses mentioned in verse 11 were dedicated to the sun by “the kings of Judah” – Manasseh and Amon. According to their idolatrous thoughts, these horses with their chariots were to draw the sun along the sky. The horses were standing “at the entrance of the house of the LORD”. Thus they defied and insulted the LORD in a gross way. We do not know who “Nathan-melech, the official” was. But the LORD knew him well. Was he a driver of the chariots of the sun?

To see the number of altars that Josiah cleansed, Jerusalem must have been full of idol altars. On every corner and every spot there was an altar. In verse 12 some altars are mentioned specifically. Josiah broke down “the altars which [were] on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz”. These altars were also made by “the kings of Judah”. The insults to the LORD by Manasseh had no end. He had done his utmost to transform the house of the LORD in all respects into an idol temple. Josiah took away all the idols, turned them into dust and threw the dust into the brook Kidron.

It is shocking amid this purification work, in which we encounter names like Ahaz and Manasseh, to suddenly come across the name of Solomon as someone who was also connected to the cult of idols (verse 13). We know from 1 Kings 11 that Solomon had been led away from the LORD by his many wives and the gods that these women had brought along. We even read that he built high places for those gods (1Kgs 11:7-8). All these idols are meaningfully referred to here as “abomination” by which the contrast between the idols of Solomon and God’s judgment of them is strongly emphasized.

In verse 14 we read that Josiah cut down the sacred pillars that functioned as objects of worship. King Hezekiah had done this before (2Kgs 18:4). The fact that two generations later this was done again by Josiah shows how persistent this idolatry was. Josiah filled the vacant space with human bones. He probably did so in order to defile this area and thereby make people afraid to fall back into this idolatry again.

## 2Kgs 23:15-20 | The Altar at Bethel

*15 Furthermore, the altar that [was] at Bethel [and] the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. 16 Now when Josiah turned, he saw the graves that [were] there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones from the graves and burned [them] on the altar and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. 17 Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." 18 He said, "Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. 19 Josiah also removed all the houses of the high places which [were] in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made provoking the LORD; and he did to them just as he had done in Bethel. 20 All the priests of the high places who [were] there he slaughtered on the altars and burned human bones on them; then he returned to Jerusalem.*

In these verses we are reminded of a history from 1 Kings 12-13. The name of Jeroboam is also mentioned here, as so often before, the addition of the negative characteristic "who made Israel sin". In his audacity, Jeroboam had invented his own religion (two golden calves) and had erected his own altar (1Kgs 12:25-33). God had told him by a prophet from Judah He would judge this.

Verses 15-16 refer to this. In the announcement of that judgment the man of God from Judah mentioned the name of Josiah as the performer of that judgment (1Kgs 13:1-2). The moment of fulfilment had come. God does not let any of His words fall to the earth. Every word comes true, both in terms of blessing and judgment.

In verses 17-18, something else took place, related to the history which is recorded in 1 Kings 13. This time it concerned the bones of the old prophet. Josiah noticed a monument and asked what it meant. It is not clear why Josiah did not know this, but the people of the city knew of it. They told

him about what the man of God had said and how Josiah had done what the man of God had announced.

It is nice that people remembered this event in Bethel, but it is not good that nothing was learnt from it. It is not so beautiful that Josiah apparently knew nothing about it, but it is beautiful that after the reminder he acted as was prophesied by the man of God. The bones of the old prophet also remained untouched.

In the same way as before in Bethel, Josiah “removed all the houses of the high places which [were] in the cities of Samaria” (verse 19). These houses were made by the kings of Israel to provoke the LORD. Josiah slaughtered the priests who had served on these high places (verse 20), something he had not done to the priests in Judah who had also sacrificed at high places (verse 8).

### **2Kgs 23:21-23 | Josiah Celebrates the Passover**

*21 Then the king commanded all the people saying, “Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this book of the covenant.” 22 Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was observed to the LORD in Jerusalem.*

The Passover was celebrated by order of King Josiah. The fact that the order to celebrate the Passover was given by a king is unique. The Passover was celebrated here during a revival. It had been celebrated at other times (Exo 12:3-11; Num 9:5; Jos 5:10; 2Chr 30:1,15,18-20,26), but there were long periods when it was not. The Passover represents the Lord’s Supper. We can deduce this from the fact that the Lord Jesus instituted the Supper during the celebration of the Passover (Lk 22:7-8,13-20). The Lord’s Supper is often celebrated, but for a longer time it was not. It has been there from the beginning.

Josiah celebrated the Passover because he had found it in Scripture and after he had cleansed the city and the land of the idols and their priests. Thus, the (local) church can only celebrate Lord’s Supper if the believers

have discovered it in God's Word and have removed from their lives what goes against God's Word (1Cor 5:7-8).

After the days of the judges we read only of a celebration of the Passover by Hezekiah (2Chr 30:1). The Passover which Josiah celebrated surpassed the Passover which Hezekiah celebrated, for it says: "Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah" (verse 22). Here we see that the greater the decay, the greater the LORD's appreciation when His institution of the Passover is kept. To celebrate it, Josiah did not think of any new things to make it attractive, but ordered that it be kept "as it is written in this book of the covenant". Josiah kept it because it was in God's Word and he kept it as it was stated in God's Word.

It was a unique Passover, because it was the best feast ever in the land, better than in the times of David and Solomon and Hezekiah. It was so great because it was held at the end of the realm of Judah, which was about to be carried away into exile.

We too live in an end time and even now it is possible to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a way that it has not been celebrated for a long time. That can happen now. The question is whether we participate. God has a meal for the end time, His Supper, prepared according to His thoughts, to take part in as He wills. All believers who come together with cleansed, willing hearts can participate. If this happens without being sectarian – Josiah speaks to "all the people" – we too may know that, however great the decay may be, the appreciation of the Lord Jesus is great when His institution of His Supper is held.

## **2Kgs 23:24-25 | Last Acts and Testimony of Josiah**

*24 Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. 25 Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.*

Josiah executed the words of the law to the last letter. The Word lived so powerfully in him because it was so fresh to him. He wanted to obey it with all his strength and zeal. He could only be satisfied when everything that was an offence to God and disobedient to His Word had been removed. It seems that after the Passover he was even more impressed by God's Word and God's holiness, so he made another tour through Judah and Jerusalem to see if there was anything else to clear up.

Whatever may have escaped his attention the first time, was seen and removed during this inspection round. The mediums and the spiritists who have kept themselves hidden as much as possible, had come to his attention. They would have done their works of darkness as quietly as possible, but they did not escape Josiah's purification actions, nor the images they had used.

The testimony given of Josiah is very similar to that given of Hezekiah. It was also said of Hezekiah that before him and after him there was no one like him. How is that possible? The solution may be that they were both the best in different respects. Hezekiah had no equal when it came to trust in God. Josiah had no equal when it came to obedience to the Word of God, which he had always followed. He had kept the Word of God and had not denied the Name of God.

His true and profound conversion "to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might" (verse 25; cf. Deu 6:5) had produced abundant works in keeping with repentance. This testimony of his conversion is also unique in Scripture. That no one like him rose up after him, becomes clear in the kings who came after him. These kings had quickly brought God's judgment over Judah and Jerusalem by carrying them away to Babylon.

## 2Kgs 23:26-27 | The Wrath of the LORD Must Come

26 *However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusa-*

*lem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"*

Despite the revival which God had brought in His grace to His people, "the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath". What was for Josiah a profound work in his heart and conscience, had been only a superficial, temporary condition for the people (Jer 25:3-7). They had not radically converted to God. We see in the same in professing Christianity. If God were to give the greatest revival in our time, this would not change the fact that the judgment of professing Christianity is coming, as Judah presented just before the exile to Babylon. This has nothing to do with the failure of God's omnipotence, but with the incorrigibility of man.

God had to reject Jerusalem because of Manasseh's provoking Him. What Manasseh had done to provoke God knew no limits. God owed it to His holiness to judge the people who, instead of calling to God, had joined Manasseh. We hear the sorrow in the heart of the LORD when He says in verse 27 about removing Judah and the rejection of Jerusalem.

### **2Kgs 23:28-30 | Death of Josiah**

*28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 29 In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when [Pharaoh Neco] saw him he killed him at Megiddo. 30 His servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father.*

At the end of his life Josiah also departed from the LORD. He had become stubborn. His authority became his trap. He is often a picture of the Lord Jesus, but he was not a perfect picture of Him. Josiah wanted to be part of the great world politics and was crushed between the superpowers Egypt and Assyria. He interfered in a fight that did not concern him and so he died.

His death was not honorable. His burial was not honorable either. His burial was done by his servants. They brought his body to Jerusalem and



buried him in his tomb. Josiah is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz who was anointed king by the people of the land.

Only Solomon and Jehoash are said to have been anointed king to take their place on the throne immediately after. In those cases, this was done to avoid any claim of others to the throne. That seemed to be the case here too. Jehoahaz was not the eldest son of Josiah. The eldest son was Joiakim. Solomon's and Jehoash's anointing was justified, Jehoahaz's anointing seemed to have been preferred by the people because of his political position.

### 2Kgs 23:31-34 | Jehoahaz King of Judah

*31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 33 Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 34 Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought [him] to Egypt, and he died there.*

From now on, until the end of the kingdom – a period of about twenty-two years – four kings are presented. During the time of these kings there are no more occasions bringing joy. The time of revivals like under Hezekiah and Josiah is over. None of the successors of Josiah is God-fearing.

The writer was very brief in his description of the kings who were about to come to power, before Judah was taken away into exile. Through the book of Jeremiah, however, we learn a lot about the downfall of the realm. There we find encounters between some of the four kings with the prophet Jeremiah, about whom there is not a single word here.

Jehoahaz was a bad king. He reigned only briefly. But just like other bad kings who had reigned for a short time, in those three months he proved what kind of king he was. Ezekiel compared him to a young lion (Eze 19:1-4). After three months, God's judgment came upon him through Pharaoh, who was still the mighty ruler on the world stage. Pharaoh imprisoned

him at Riblah, a city of priests. Thereby his kingship came to an end. Pharaoh Neco also imposed a fine on the land. God seemed to be on the side of Pharaoh and to reject the kings of Judah. It does not mean that they were more wicked than Pharaoh, but that they were much more responsible for their sin.

Pharaoh also showed his power over Judah by making Eliakim, a brother of Jehoahaz, king. Another proof of the power of Pharaoh is that he changed the name Eliakim to Jehoiakim. He did not make him king instead of Jehoahaz, but in the place of Josiah, his father. It is as if the whole kingship of Jehoahaz did not exist. It is possible that Jehoahaz pursued an anti-Egyptian policy and thereby aroused the anger of Pharaoh. It says it so explicitly, that Pharaoh imprisoned Jehoahaz “that he might not reign in Jerusalem”.

### **2Kgs 23:35-37 | Jehoiakim King of Judah**

*35 So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco. 36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name [was] Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*

Jehoiakim may have been made king by Pharaoh, but he had to pay Pharaoh a high tribute. To be able to pay that tax he applied the same method as Menahem had done (2Kgs 15:20). Only he didn't limit charging the financially strong, like Menahem had done, but demanded a contribution from every member of the population. It has been assumed that he extorted the population of the land out of revenge, because they had chosen his brother above him to be king (verse 30).

Submission to Pharaoh did not make Jehoiakim a king who bows down under the judgment of God. During his eleven-year reign he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He followed his fathers, meaning Manasseh and Amon.

We see how Judah became more and more controlled by other nations, to eventually end up in the power of Babylon.

## 2 Kings 24

### **2Kgs 24:1-7 | Jehoiakim King of Judah (continued)**

*1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant [for] three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. 2 The LORD sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken through His servants the prophets. 3 Surely at the command of the LORD it came upon Judah, to remove [them] from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4 and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD would not forgive. 5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place. 7 The king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.*

“In his days”, the days when Jehoiakim was king, Nebuchadnezzar – his name is mentioned here for the first time in Scripture – came up against Jerusalem for the first time (cf. Dan 1:1). On that occasion Daniel, together with other princes, was brought to Babylon. It was the year 606 BC. A year later an important battle took place, at Carchemish, where Nebuchadnezzar took over the world domination of Egypt (verse 7; Jer 46:2). From then on, Nebuchadnezzar became the golden head (Dan 2:37-38), the first world empire, after Judah was no longer the people of God.

When Jehoiakim had submitted to Nebuchadnezzar for three years, he “rebels” against him. Perhaps we should consider the possibility that he had taken sides with Pharaoh. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar took measures to subjugate the rebellious Jehoiakim.

Remarkably, the marauding bands were not attributed to Nebuchadnezzar, but to the LORD. The LORD acted and did so in faithfulness to His Word. He had foretold this by the service of His servants, the prophets,

and so it happened (verse 2). The bands coming up against Judah did not happen in the first place because of Jehoiakim's rebellion, but "because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done" (verse 3).

A sin of Manasseh that is particularly important in this judgment is that he had shed "innocent blood", yes, that he had "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood" (verse 4). The LORD took all this so seriously, that He "would not forgive".

We certainly have to do with a forgiving God. However, that does not mean that God's patience is infinite. When judgment comes, the moment has come when He will no longer forgive. This is never due to God, but to man's impenitence.

We live in a time comparable to that of these last kings. Judgment comes on professing Christianity. The fact that God has chosen a remnant for Himself, even now, does not change this judgment. For the mass of professing Christianity there is no forgiveness anymore.

This brings the historian to the end of his description of the life of Jehoiakim. He only mentioned his death (verse 6). Nothing is said of a burial. He didn't get one either. He was given a donkey burial: he was discarded as unsuitable and despicable (Jer 22:18-19).

The communication of verse 7 follows directly on from the communication of Jehoiakim's death. In this verse the writer stated that Jehoiakim did not receive help from the king of Egypt in his revolt against Babylon (verse 1).

## 2Kgs 24:8-12 | Jehoiachin King of Judah

*8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name [was] Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. 10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. 12 Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign.*

After the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin becomes king. This boy was only eighteen years old. He reigned for three months. His short reign was long enough to give him the standard feature that “he did evil in the sight of the LORD” like some of his forebears. To indicate the evil he had done, it is said that he did “according to all that his father had done”.

“At that time”, that is, in the three months that he reigned, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar went up to Jerusalem and besieged the city. While his servants were carrying out the siege, Nebuchadnezzar himself also came up to Jerusalem. When he was there, Jehoiachin voluntarily surrendered, “he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials”.

The surrender took place in “the eighth year of his reign”, i.e. the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the first dating with a reference to the reign of a foreign ruler.

### **2Kgs 24:13-16 | All Jerusalem Led Away Into Exile**

*13 He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said. 14 Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.*

After the surrender of Jehoiachin Nebuchadnezzar “carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house”. He took everything with him to Babylon. The treasures of the LORD's house were later abused by Belshazzar (Dan 5:1-4). Again later Cyrus the Persian ensured that they were brought back to Jerusalem (Ezra 5:14).

As well as the valuable materials, skilled people with useful abilities were carried away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. These people could

organize an uprising and thus endanger the authority of Nebuchadnezzar. In this captivity, the prophet Ezekiel (Est 1:1-2) and Mordecai (Est 2:5-6) were also carried away into exile. The only ones who did not have to go were the poorest people of the land. There would be no danger of an organized uprising by them.

He also carried away into exile Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with his mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land. The military men and people able to make weapons (cf. 1Sam 13:19) were also carried away into exile by Nebuchadnezzar. In this way, Nebuchadnezzar prevented any form of resistance.

If the devil succeeds in somehow capturing us by a certain sin, he has nothing left to fear from us and nothing remains of our testimony for the Lord. The same applies to the church. If we engage in strange teachings, such as legalism (see the letter to the Galatians) and philosophy (see the letter to the Colossians), we will also be captured by them and cannot testify of the Savior. The church also loses its witnessing character, both to God and to the world, when the flesh can assert itself without being condemned. We see this in the first letter to the Corinthians.

### **2Kgs 24:17-20 | Zedekiah King of Judah**

*17 Then the king of Babylon made his uncle Mattaniah king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 20 For through the anger of the LORD [this] came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, a son of Josiah, king instead of Jehoiachin, whom he had carried away to Babylon. He gave Mattaniah another name calling him Zedekiah. Zedekiah means 'my righteousness is Yahweh'. He acted in complete conflict with that name in his actions, for he brought the iniquity of Jerusalem to a climax. As for the righteousness of Yahweh, we see that He acted with Zedekiah in accordance with that

name. Because of Zedekiah, the judgment on Israel was an expression of the LORD's righteousness.

Although he could have been warned by what happened to his three predecessors, he continued to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following Jehoiakim. Zedekiah was a weakling. He listened to what seemed reasonable to him (cf. Jer 38:4-6). He did not listen to the warnings of the LORD by his prophets. There was no faith in him.

In his stupidity he rebelled against the king of Babylon and broke the oath he had sworn. Therefore he would perish (Eze 17:15). He resorted to Egypt to cast off the yoke of Babylon, thinking he would not become a servant of Egypt. He did not know history; he was blind to it. A man without God is so stupid!



## 2 Kings 25

### **2Kgs 25:1-7 | Flee and Capture of Zedekiah**

*1 Now in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, camped against it and built a siege wall all around it. 2 So the city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 On the ninth day of the [fourth] month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 4 Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war [fled] by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. 6 Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. 7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.*

The history described in these verses is also found in Jeremiah 39 and Ezekiel 24. Here the final judgement begins. This was the end for Judah and there was to be no more grace.

As a result of Zedekiah's uprising, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem for the third time. The city was besieged and a siege wall was built all around it. This happened to the city that was first surrounded by the favor of the LORD. The city, however, had driven out the LORD by its iniquity, and now experienced its consequences. The city was surrounded by enemies and no longer by the favor of God.

Nebuchadnezzar took his time for the conquest. For two years he besieged the city. His aim was to starve the city. Lack of food would cause many to starve to death and have made the remaining living so weak that the city could be taken without any resistance.

The famine drove the soldiers to a deed of despair. Instead of surrendering, as Jeremiah had strongly urged (Jer 38:17), an attempt was made to

escape. The moment the city was broken into by the enemy and the enemy entered the city, they made their attempt to escape. They left the city through the gate during the night. Zedekiah also participated in the flight. It was all foretold by God (Eze 12:12-15). It did not get out of His hand. It happened just as He had said.

Zedekiah managed to get far away, even to the plains of Jericho. It only needed a moment longer and he could have crossed the Jordan. But there he was overtaken. It is also nonsensical to think that you can flee from the discipline of God. There was no defense whatsoever when he was arrested. There was nothing left of his army, it was completely scattered. Every soldier thought only of himself. There was no one who wanted to defend him anymore.

When he is seized, he was brought to the king of Babylon, who was then in Riblah, the place where Jehoahaz was imprisoned (2Kgs 23:31-33). There stood a little king of a small city, king of the throne of David, before the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, whom God had said to be the golden head (Dan 2:37-38). God was on the side of Nebuchadnezzar because of the unfaithfulness of His people. Nebuchadnezzar was His rod of discipline for His people and “he passed sentence on him” (Jer 52:9).

His sentence was executed in verse 7. It was a dramatic and horrific sentence. This verse speaks twice about Zedekiah’s eyes. First his sons were slaughtered before his eyes. The word “slaughtered” shows that they were killed in a horrible way. He saw how it was done. With this picture before his eyes, they are blinded. This picture would remain with him for the rest of his life. What was done to him was worse than death. It was an incessant torment of the mind.

## **2Kgs 25:8-21 | Judah Carried Away Into Exile**

*8 Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 He burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every great house he burned with fire. 10 So all the army of the Chaldeans who [were with] the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. 11 Then the*

rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the people, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile. 12 But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen. 13 Now the bronze pillars which were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea which were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, and all the bronze vessels which were used in [temple] service. 15 The captain of the guard also took away the firepans and the basins, what was fine gold and what was fine silver. 16 The two pillars, the one sea, and the stands which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD — the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. 17 The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a bronze capital was on it; the height of the capital was three cubits, with a network and pomegranates on the capital all around, all of bronze. And the second pillar was like these with network. 18 Then the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest, with the three officers of the temple. 19 From the city he took one official who was overseer of the men of war, and five of the king's advisers who were found in the city; and the scribe of the captain of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was led away into exile from its land.

These verses report on the downfall of the realm of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by order of Nebuchadnezzar. This work began on “the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon” (verse 8), which in our era was August 15, 586 BC. “Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, the servant of the king of Babylon, a servant of the king of Babylon” began burning all the houses in Jerusalem with fire in order of importance.

The first house he burned was “the house of the LORD” (verse 9). The house had been empty for five years. Maybe there were still some materials, but the glory of the LORD had left. That glory is gone to this day. Professing Christianity also has buildings that are impressive to the eye but empty inside. They are empty shells. The house of the LORD had become

useless, and was given away to the nations. The king's house and the other houses had lost their meaning and were being destroyed. Where there are no more houses and people, a wall is no longer necessary. The wall was also demolished (verse 10).

Then it was the turn of the homeless and rest of the population of the city. Together with the deserters and a remnant of the crowd living outside Jerusalem, they are led by Nebuzaradan to Babylon (verse 11). Nebuzaradan did not take all people with him. He left a few to take care of the land and maintain it (verse 12).

In verses 13-17, a detailed description is given of everything Nebuchadnezzar took with him. It shows us once again how beautiful everything had been and how good it could have been if the people not only had a beautiful temple, but also a heart to serve the LORD. If the heart is not there, everything loses its value to God. He is not bound to His people. If it does not meet His purpose, He sets it aside. This is also the general judgment on professing Christianity.

What became of all these temple objects is an extremely sad contrast to the position given to them by Solomon, as he placed them with great care in the house of the LORD in his time. In verse 15, reference is still made to that time in connection with "the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands". The Babylonians had no respect for this. They demolished these parts. What was of value to them, they took with them.

The people did not concern themselves with the meaning of the pillars and the sea. The pillars symbolically represented the power of God, the basis on which the temple could only be maintained. The sea pointed to the cleansing of the priest to be fit to enter God's temple. However, if the people denied God's power and the necessary cleansing, the symbols lose their meaning and God allowed these things to be taken away by gentile nations.

Today we see the same thing in professing Christianity. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will lose their real meaning when given their own interpretation and when they are separated from God's meaning. If we do not experience them prayerfully and spiritually, the flesh will feed on them. In this way God will take away these things by the people and withdraw

Himself from them and from those who give them their own interpretation. It may all look beautiful, but He is not present there.

The verses 18-21 give an account of the leading people from Jerusalem being put to death. The people in the city who were connected to the temple were first captured. They must have been the fiercest opponents of surrendering to the king of Babylon. They were also those who preceded the people into idolatry. Their imprisonment and death were an exercise of God's righteousness. The commander took some other prominent people from the city with the prisoners, to the king of Babylon to be killed together with the temple officials.

This total destruction, as an expression of God's righteousness, was the beginning of the Babylonian exile (verse 21b).

### **2Kgs 25:22-26 | Appointment and Death of Gedaliah**

*22 Now [as for] the people who were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan over them. 23 When all the captains of the forces, they and [their] men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah [governor], they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, namely, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. 24 Gedaliah swore to them and their men and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans; live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you." 25 But it came about in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck Gedaliah down so that he died along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. 26 Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.*

In this section we have a brief announcement about what happened to the people who were left in the land of Judah. These people largely ended up in Egypt. A detailed description of this can be found in Jeremiah 40:1-43:7. The announcement here completes the picture of the end of Judah's realm. It ends with the exile to Babylon and the flight to Egypt.

After Nebuchadnezzar had finished all his actions in and with Judah and Jerusalem, he appointed Gedaliah, “the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan” over the people he allowed to live in “the land of Judah”. Gedaliah was one of the descendants of God-fearing Shaphan, whom we met during the reign and reformation of Josiah (2Kgs 22:3,8-14).

When four of the named captains heard of Gedaliah’s appointment, they and their men came to him in Mizpah. These four probably fled with Zedekiah (verse 4) and escaped the pursuit by the Babylonians. They did not seem to accept the situation that had arisen. Gedaliah advised them urgently, he “swore to them”, to just stay in the land. He wanted to convince them that they would have nothing to fear from the Chaldeans if they stayed and served the king of Babylon. They could be sure that things would go well with them. Gedaliah spoke of what God had said through Jeremiah. Jeremiah had always urged the people to submit to king Nebuchadnezzar. If we bow under the discipline of God, it will bring blessing to us.

Despite Gedaliah’s penetrating words, the few remaining in the land revolted against Gedaliah. They pertinently refused to function as servants of the Babylonians. They had their own views on the matter and their own plans to deal with it and saw that he was a danger to their plans. That is why Gedaliah was murdered. A detailed account of the murder of Gedaliah (verse 25) can be found in Jeremiah 40:13-41:15. The perpetrators and all the people then fled to Egypt.

However, the Holy Spirit does not close the book with this. He finishes with a ray of hope that we read about in the following and also the last verses of this book.

## **2Kgs 25:27-30 | Grace for Jehoiachin**

*27 Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh [day] of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; 28 and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the throne of the kings who [were] with him in Babylon. 29 Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king’s presence*

*regularly all the days of his life; 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.*

In these verses a ray of hope lights up. For this, the Holy Spirit advances to “the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin”, which was 560 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was no longer king. Jehoiachin, who had been in Babylon since he was eighteen, was now fifty-five. It was his deserved judgment, for he had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

But then suddenly we read in these verses about grace. Jehoiachin was taken out of captivity, spoken kindly and was given a position of prestige above the other kings who were subject to the king of Babylon. He was to eat at the table of the king of Babylon, as long as he lived. His entire allowance was also guaranteed for all the days of his life.

In what happens to Jehoiachin we see a picture of what will happen to the people of God, that is, with a remnant, in the future. In them God will accept His people again in grace and take care of them as long as they are His people on earth, that is, during the entire period of the millennial kingdom of peace.

In what happens to Jehoiachin, we still see another picture. Here we see the change in someone who repents. It is the display of undeserved and unexpected grace. It also shows that in an evil time, when judgment comes on the masses, God has grace for the individual. Those who take part in it are given different clothing, which speaks of different behavior, and are assured of an allowance for their spiritual life.

## **Other Publications**

On the website [www.oudesporen.nl](http://www.oudesporen.nl) more Bible commentaries and publications that have been translated into English are available and will become available, Lord willing. They can be downloaded for free as pdf, e-pub and mobi (for Amazons Kindle).

The commentaries on the books of the Bible can also be read on electronic devices like desktop, laptop and smartphone on [www.kingcomments.com](http://www.kingcomments.com). Bible references are linked. See 'Information' on that website.





