

WHAT THINGS MATTER MOST TO GOD?

Part I – II Kings 9: 1-37 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

In these last five chapters of the Elijah-Elisha series, God started cleaning house in Israel. Few people want to stop to look at II Kings 9-13 because it is a bloody account. Millions might question any pastor preaching on these five chapters, asking, “Is preaching on such passages any way to grow a church?” Beloved, I would simply answer by saying, “God has called us to preach the whole counsel of God, even the hard passages. God builds His church upon His holy Word, not through gimmicks or hopscotching through the Word. Our goal in preaching the Word is not to be flashy, but faithful. Rachel Evans in a book entitled “Why Millennials Are Leaving the Church,” she wrote that the problem in most churches is not the lack of style, but the lack of substance.” Perhaps she is right, as today what is popular is consumerism, performances, and trying to draw a crowd. Nevertheless, I am convinced that God’s people who know and love Him, that all of you long for the truth, for learning the meaning of every chapter in the Bible, and you long for faithfulness in preaching the Word. That’s why we are stopping in II Kings 9 to teach and preach it all, regardless of its being a graphically hard passage in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is profitable for our growth in grace.

Thus, we are coming to the finish line in the life of Elisha, in our 37th message in our Elijah-Elisha Series. The year it appears is 884 BC. Elisha died five years later in 839 BC. Between today’s message and the end of Elisha’s life are II Kings chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13—five more chapters. Elisha is an extremely amazing and colorful prophet, the protégé of Elijah. Our chapter today begins by taking us back 62 years to 906 BC when God met with Elijah and spoke to him in the cave where Elijah had escaped to, running from Jezebel after her death threat upon him. When God asked Elijah what he was doing hiding out in that wilderness cave, Elijah twice told God, in I Kings 19: 10 and 14, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I, only am left and they seek my life to take it away.” God’s response to Elijah initially was to give him three anointing assignments in 906 BC. Elijah must anoint Hazael, king of Syria, Jehu, the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah to be prophet in his place. Then the Lord added this reproof to Elijah, in I Kings 19: 18, saying, “Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” Have you ever seen strange events and wondered, “Lord, what is going on here? Are you still on the throne? Are you still in control? In all this bloody purge of the house of Ahab and Jezebel, what things matter the most to You, Lord?” That’s how I have approached this chapter. When God allows things to happen that raise our eyebrows, that break our hearts, or that leave us with puzzled spirits, we need to listen for the voice of God to clear up the muddy water for us, to remove the fog.

Know that God does at times remarkably give us clues from heaven as to what is going on. This past week, Pastor Tony Evans wife, Lois, lost her hard-battle with cancer. Her death left Pastor Tony, his family, and his church of 9,500 people scratching their heads, weeping, and wondering why her life ended so abruptly when so many thousands of people were praying. I listened to the words of Jonathan Evans, the son of Tony and Lois. In his eulogy to end the funeral, he confessed how he prayed. He said, “Dear Lord, this was a great opportunity for multitudes to tangibly see Your glory. “Why did You let Mom die?” “Where are You?” Jonathan Evans said what he heard back from God in his spirit words from heaven that set him straight about “the nature of God’s victory.” Listen to the words Jonathan Evans sensed he heard from the Lord. He said that God was showing him, “Because of the victory that I have given you, there were always only two answers to your prayers. Either your mother, Lois was going to be healed, or she was going to be healed. Either she was going to live, or she was going to live. Either she was going to be with family, or she was going to be with family. Either she was going to be well taken care of, or she was going to be well taken care of. Jonathan, victory belongs to Me!” That’s what really mattered as God helped the Tony Evans family accept Lois Evan’s Homegoing.

As I have studied this bloody purge of the house of Ahab and Jezebel, that’s all I can think of is—Tell us Lord, “What things really matter most to You?” As I have pursued these 37 verses, there are five things that seem to float to the top of the pile as we read about this reign of King Jehu of Israel. These five desires of God are for His personal assignments to be followed, His justice to be fully meted out, His suffering saints to be not forgotten, but vindicated, His worship to be found and restored, and for His Word to be final and unshakable. Let’s plunge into this chapter and learn to know and believe that God’s desires matter most to Him.

GOD DESIRES HIS PERSONAL ASSIGNMENTS TO BE FOLLOWED. (I.)

Notice II Kings 9: 1-6. Here the scene continues from our last message. Let’s drop back to II Kings 8: 25-29 to catch up on the scene. The scene is Ramoth-Gilead, 45 miles straight east across the Jordan from Jezreel in Samaria. Here Judah came and joined Israel in seeking to recover the city of Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians. In this battle raging, one of the chief commanders of the Israeli army was Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. This Jehoshaphat was not the king of Judah and the father of Jehoram or Joram. Jehoshaphat was a common name meaning God or Jehovah, Yahweh has judged. Jehu apparently in a lull in the battle was strategizing with other commanders in an officer’s meeting. Finally, God’s command to Elijah, that Elijah delegated to Elisha, was now delegated to one of Elisha’s seminary students—one of the sons of the prophets. Why Elijah didn’t follow through on his assignment, we don’t know. Why Elisha didn’t follow through on His delegated assignment from Elijah, we don’t know. Elisha was now getting to be an old prophet. Now Elisha dispatched one of these sons of the

prophets in Samaria to do this original assignment first given to Elijah, and then delegated to Elisha. These schools of the prophets were held in Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho, Carmel and Samaria. Elisha delegated this son of the prophets to have the authority to anoint Jehu privately. Elisha told this young prophet to flee the scene as fast as he could, because the anointing would start a serious conflict.

When this son of the prophets finally, 62 years after the assignment was first given, went into the courtyard in Ramoth-gilead, he was carrying a flask of oil, and he asked for Jehu to rise from among his fellows. Then his job was to have Jehu take him to an inner chamber for him to deliver his message. In this private room, God's assignment long in being fulfilled was fulfilled finally. It's interesting that this young prophet poured the flask of oil on Jehu's head and said, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "I anoint you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel." Even though Judah and Israel were separate kingdoms and both nations were following Baal, they were the chosen people of the Lord, and God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12: 1-3 was still standing. Israel and Judah had turned away from the Lord, but the Lord had not forsaken them. I remind us today that when God gives us an assignment to follow, it is paramount to Him that it be fulfilled. And in our text, we find that God got the assignment completed, not from Elijah, or Elisha, but from one of Elisha's students, one of the sons of the prophets. I ask each of us—are we following through on following God's assignments to us? Or are we delaying, procrastinating, and refusing to follow His assignments? His greatest assignment is for us all—the great commission in Matthew 28: 16-20. 2nd,

GOD DESIRES HIS JUSTICE TO BE FULLY METED OUT. (II.) Notice II Kings 9: 7-24. This young prophet didn't just pour oil on Jehu and tell him, you are the new king of Israel. He stayed and talked to Jehu and explained the work God had for him to do—to wipe out the family of Ahab in Israel and to execute God's judgment and justice on this powerful family because of their killing of many prophets and worshippers of the Lord. Notice II Kings 9: 7-10. Justice matters to God. His Word is full of God's intent. When Abraham interceded for his nephew Lot in Sodom, his word to God was a cry for justice. In Genesis 18: 25, he cried to God, "Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Psalm 99: 4 is clear, "The King in His might loves justice." God's sovereignty in bringing justice on earth is why He had Jehu anointed to wipe off the map the house of Ahab and Jezebel who worshipped Baal. God will not sweep sin under the rug. Psalm 99: 1 declares, "The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble." In Psalm 75: 6-8, we read Asaph's psalm saying, "For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting-up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and He pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs." Paul wrote in Romans 12: 19,

quoting Deuteronomy 32: 35, saying, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” God had this justice planned for 62 years before this assignment was completed. What does that speak of? It speaks of God’s love and patience. We read in II Peter 3: 9-10, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise (speaking of judgment coming—speaking of finally destroying the world by fire) as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing/wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to or reach repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come, like a thief.” Never forget, what God did on a small scale through king Jehu, to wipe out the house of Ahab and Jezebel, He will one day do to all who forsaken Him. In Zechariah 14: 12-13, God’s justice will finally arrive on those who come against Jerusalem. This speaks of the Battle of Armageddon. “And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. And on that day, a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them.” Justice matters to our God. Thirdly,

GOD DESIRES HIS SUFFERING SAINTS TO BE NOT FORGOTTEN, BUT VINDICATED. (III.)

Notice II Kings 9: 25-29. Listen to how God has not forgotten his martyred saints, Naboth and his sons, whom Jezebel had killed, and then she gave his vineyard to Ahab. King Joram, the son of Ahab, had his body thrown on the plot of ground Ahab lusted after. God earlier in 899 BC, 55 years earlier promised the dogs would lick up the blood of Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth stolen by Ahab, and Elijah promised in I Kings 21: 23 that the dogs would lick up Jezebel’s blood by the wall of Jezreel. God’s suffering-saints matter to God. He will avenge the blood of His saints. When Israel was mistreated in Egypt, we read that God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, in Exodus 3: 9, saying, “And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.” When God’s people are persecuted, afflicted, attacked, and even martyred, payday someday is coming. Notice when the king of Judah, heard king Joram of Israel, yell to the king of Judah, Ahaziah, “Treachery!” Ahaziah fled south and Jehu said, “Shoot him.” So king Ahaziah fled wounded as he left Jezreel. He made it to Beth-haggan and turned northwest at the Ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. He headed for Megiddo where he tried to hide, but Jehu’s men who pronounced him king, shot him again. Again, caring for God’s forsaken and martyred saints meant that Judah’s king Ahaziah worshipped Baal and followed his mother, Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel. Not only does justice matter, but vindicating and punishing those who attack God’s saints is what Jehu did.

You may say—this is Old Testament retribution. No, listen to Paul in II Thessalonians 1: 5-9. We read, “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are

also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” Turn if you desire to II Chronicles 22: 4-9 and we see Ezra giving us a picture of the death of Ahaziah and explaining in more detail his death. Listen!

King Ahaziah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done. For after the death of his father, they (Ahab and Jezebel) were his counselors, to his undoing. He even followed their counsel and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to make war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead. And the Syrians wounded Joram, and he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that he had received at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was wounded. But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come about through his going to visit Joram. For when he came there, he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. And when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he met the princes of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers, who attended Ahaziah, and he killed them. He searched for Ahaziah, and he was captured while hiding in Samaria, and he was brought to Jehu and put to death. They buried him, for they said, “He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart.” And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom.” Never say that God forgets the persecutions and the martyrdoms of His saints. Even in the final Day of Judgment, pictured in the opening of the fifth seal, listen to what is spoken in heaven to the Lord in Revelation 6: 9-11. We read, “When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” Even in heaven before the Great Tribulation is over, God is talking to his martyred saints, telling them their numbers will increase, but soon, He will judge and avenge their blood.” God keeps the books and He will never forget to avenge those of His children, His disciples who have given their life’s blood for Him. God is faithful.

GOD DESIRES HIS WORSHIP TO BE FOUND AND RESTORED. (IV.)

Notice II Kings 9: 22 and 30—33. For a moment, let’s double back to the death of Joram and the words of Jehu to him when he and Ahaziah road out to see what

king of news one of their great commanders, Jehu had for them. Listen to II Kings 9: 22, “And when Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” Jehu answered, “What peace can there be, as long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?” The messengers and now Joram all asked over and over, “Is it peace?” What are these whorings all about? When God gave the covenant to His people in Exodus 34: 12-16 we hear the warning of God. “Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim, for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.”

This is God’s declaration that our worship matters hugely to Him. Leviticus 17: 7 states, “So you shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.” In God’s last words to Moses, He prophesied, saying in Deut. 31: 16, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant that I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be devoured.” What are the Baals of the world that tempt us in our worship? Are we out for performance, for being like the world, for wanting what the world has to offer? God is calling us—and saying, “What I desire most is that you find a way to worship Me and Me alone. May our worship be a sweet and holy sacrifice of praise to the Lord. Let me give you God’s path to reverent, passionate, and glorious worship and praise. He says, in Psalm 96: 9, “Worship Me in the splendor of My holiness.” Praise Me. Psalm 150: 1-6. Fifthly,

GOD DESIRES HIS WORD TO BE FINAL AND UNSHAKABLE. (V.)

Notice II Kings 9: 3, 5, 12, 26, and 34-37. Hear the Word of the Lord. If you believe this word, just like the commanders of Jehu thought the son of the prophet was a mad man, when they heard the announcement, they fell in and made Jehu king. Beloved, I want to tell you today in our politically divided country, God’s Word takes precedence over national politics, over war, over the polls, over Congress, over culture, and over popular opinion. As it was in the days of Jehu, the charioteer, so today, God’s word is the last word and it is the catalyst for all change in human history. People may laugh at us, but God’s Word is forever settled in heaven. (Psalm 119: 89) Paul said God’s Word is foolishness, folly to those who are perishing—I Corinthians 1: 18. Follow this son of the prophets and speak God’s truth no matter what. Don’t change it one iota. Proverbs 30: 5-6. Amen.