

# WHERE IS GOD

## *God's divine dealings with human government, nations and men*

**On the surface of everyday life, whether in ancient Israel or our modern world, there are news stories of nations firing weapons at each other. The Scriptures are filled with reports of aggressive acts made by world leaders who threaten the stability of nations. The annals of history are filled with accounts of conflicts, escalation and death.**



Today's headlines speak of Iranian fast boats intimidating naval vessels in the Persian Gulf; North Korea firing Ballistic missiles over Japan's airspace; or Hamas sending suicide bombers into Tel Aviv. They are no different than the 9th Century BC Syrian king Ben-hadad sending raiding parties into Israel, or the Assyrian empire breaking treaties in order to subdue the middle east.

Do we not hear of nations breaking binding treaties in our day? We are told if their actions are left unchecked, an entire region of the world would be turned upside down. It wasn't any different in Elisha's day.

Today, we turn to our local or national news reports and hear of unrest, political wrangling, economic crisis, natural disasters and suffering. Yet these headlines were just as real in Elisha's day as it is in our day. In fact, our lesson this morning describes two coup d'état's set in motion by the Prophet

Elisha. They result in the assassination of three kings, the annihilation of two dynasties and the Middle East turned upside down.

The Arab spring of 2011 through 2013 was child's play in comparison to the political transformation that took place in Elisha's day. The names may be different, the playing field may be larger, but the global intrigue and violence has not changed.

However, in this lesson, I want to go beyond the report of another day in the turbulent history of the Middle East. God has given us these accounts for a reason. He wants us to understand Him better. In fact, we will learn a lot about the depravity of man and God's sovereign control over His creation.

There are three features we will discover in today's lesson. First, God is in control and is sovereign over all nations and governments. Despite the evil we see unfolding in the

world, God still has His hand on the steering wheel of history. Second, God is faithful to His Word, even if a great deal of time passes. He does not forget His promises. Third, God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Don't ever think for one minute that the wicked acts of the unrighteous will go unpunished. Though time may pass, God does not forget. They will meet their end, and it will not be pleasant.

Let's visit the headlines of the past so we might understand the workings of God today.



1. In 2 Kings 8:7 and in 2 Kings 9:1 we find the prophet Elisha setting in motion two coup d'état's resulting in the assassination of three kings and the end of two dynasties. **Discuss Elisha's dealings with Syria in 2 Kings 8:7-15 and with Israel in 2 Kings 9:1-3.**

### ANSWER:

First, in regards to Syria – 2 Kings 8:7.

It was not that King Ben-hadad had any revelation of the true God. He had numerous encounters. His general (Naaman) was healed of leprosy by God (2 Kings 5:1-14), and his army was blinded by God (2 Kings 6:8-23) and later frightened by God (2 Kings 7:6-7, 14-15). He knew of God's power.

Perhaps this is the reason Ben-hadad treated Elisha with respect (2 Kings 8:7-9) and offered him a gift of forty camels loaded with every good thing in Damascus. He knew Elisha was a prophet of God and knew the word Elisha spoke would be so.

But note, it was Elisha who went to Damascus. He was not invited. It was God who sent him. The king of Syria probably recognized him because he thought he came with a message regarding his sickness. But Elisha came for another reason. Hazael, Ben-hadad's servant, was to become king. Hazael was to be used as an instrument of judgment against Israel -- 2 Kings 8:10-15.

Second, in regards to Israel – 2 Kings 9:1. For 12 years Jehoram ruled Israel. In that time, he had numerous encounters with Elisha. Each time Elisha provided the king of Israel with another glimpse of God's power. Like the healing of Naaman, the Syrian General of leprosy, or the deliverance of the Israeli-Judean-Edomite confederacy from death in the desert of Moab, or rendering a Syrian brigade helpless by leading them into Samaria.

There was plenty of divine revelation, there was plenty of time and numerous opportunities for King Jehoram to repent and turn to God, but he did not turn.

In 2 Kings 9:1-3 we find Elisha appointed by God to anoint the next king of Israel and bring judgment on the house of Ahab.

**2. What insights can we gain from the above events? (see Isaiah 40:15, 17, 22-24; Romans 13:1-5).**

**ANSWER:**

God raises up leaders and He brings them down — Isaiah 40:15, 17, 22-24

“Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. . . . <sup>17</sup> All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

<sup>22</sup> It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: <sup>23</sup> That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. <sup>24</sup> Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.”

God calls civic leaders His ministers — Romans 13:1-5.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. <sup>2</sup> Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: <sup>4</sup> For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. <sup>5</sup> Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

God holds all men accountable for their deeds.

God is Sovereign over both good and bad leaders. He has his purpose with each. They will only be able to go so far in their evil ways before God will hinder them as he did with Ben-hadad, or kill them, as he eventually did with King Jehoram.

They will be held accountable for their actions. They will not escape.

If God is in control of all nations and raises up leaders and puts them down while holding them accountable for all their deeds. Will He not hold us accountable in how we conduct ourselves?

Therefore, we ought to be careful before our leaders, regardless of their political bent. Good or bad, they are servants in the hands of God. The reckless disrespect we see towards our leaders is wrong. We do not have to agree with their language or their policies to regard their office with respect. The issues are much bigger than the personalities in government and their political views. We need to see that it is God who allowed the placement of our leaders — i.e. the Clinton’s, the Bush’s the

Obama's and the Trumps. It is He who groomed them, and then moved the hearts of the people to place them in office.

3. **Twenty years before we get to our passage, God spoke to a discouraged prophet and commanded him to execute three things — 1 Kings 19:15-18. What was Elijah to do?**

**ANSWER:**

1 Kings 19:15-18

“And the LORD said unto him (Elijah), Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, **anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:** <sup>16</sup> And **Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel:** and **Elisha** the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. <sup>17</sup> And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. <sup>18</sup> Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”

4. **Elijah executed only one of the three items commanded in 1 Kings 19:15-18. Why? What can we learn from this?**

**ANSWER:**

God is going to bring justice. But He is going to do it in His time. So Elijah finds Elisha and trains him for eight years before the Lord takes Elijah home in a whirlwind.

But wait, what about Hazael in Syria and Jehu in Israel? At the time of Elijah's commission Jehu and Hazael were probably not public figures. It took 20 years for Jehu to become the leader of the Israeli army and Hazael to become second to the King of Syria. Neither were in position to bring about a coup d'état at the time God spoke to Elijah.

**So what do we learn:**

1. God knows the future.
2. He has a plan
3. He does not forget.

It took 20 years for this prophecy to take place, but God was behind it all. He was behind the development of Jehu and Hazael, just as He is behind others who have come into power in our day.

The interval between the command and the execution of God's command was a period of grace. He provided 20 years for Jehoram and Ben-hadad to repent. In this we learn that we have a long-suffering heavenly Father, not wanting any to perish, but His patience should never be mistaken as forgetfulness.

So what does this mean to me? God had a plan then, He has a plan now. He was in control then, He is in control today. He even knows the names of the future leaders. We can rest in the fact that God is in control and in the end, His agenda for mankind will come to pass.

**5. Discuss 2 Kings 9:4-10 and compare it with 1 Kings 19:15-16; 1 Kings 21:21-24. What do we learn about God from these accounts?**

Don't ever think for a minute that evil will go unpunished. It will have its day in God's court. Justice will be poured out.

In 2 Kings 9:4-10, we see God's justice by sending a prophet to anoint Jehu king of Israel. It fulfills God's promise to deal with the wicked deeds of the Ahab/Jezebel dynasty. The prophet's words are an exact quote of the prophecy spoken in 1 Kings 19:15-16; and Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-24.

What does this mean to us.

- a. God does not forget. Even when time passes and we think God will not deal with the issue, He does. God deals with injustices in His way and at the right time in history.

Knowing what He would do, God gave King Jehoram enough divine revelation and opportunity to repent. Yes, God would still pour out his judgment on the house of Ahab, but Jehoram could have escaped God's wrath. He saw the power of God and had opportunity after opportunity to repent and turn to God and escape the wrath to come, but he did not.

Jehoram was killed by Jehu. An arrow through the heart and an eternity in hell. King Ahaziah of Judah was also killed. He was the grandson of Ahab and nephew of Jehoram. Jehu then killed Jezebel (2 Kings 9:32-37). After this, he had the entire dynasty of Ahab destroyed by decapitating the 70 sons of Ahab (2 Kings 10:1-10).

- b. God is faithful to His word. He was faithful then, as He is faithful today. Those in Christ will escape judgment, because their sins have been nailed to the cross and they bear them no more. Those without Christ will perish.