

2nd Kings Chapters 13-14 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is called "How God deals with us". These two chapters focus on the idea that we are accountable to God with our lives. Before I scare you away from wanting to read any further, know that the issue is not salvation, but about using the most valuable thing God gives us, which is our time. The way I view God's grace versus doing things for God is as follows: We don't live a good life in order to earn His love, we should live a good life strictly out of gratitude for what God has already done for us. In other words, living as God desires is not about earning points with Him, but just being grateful for the salvation He has already given us and because that's the best way for us to live.
 - a) OK John, that is good common sense advice. We know that. Why should I read further? What these chapters show us is how God deals with us when for the time being we do turn from Him with our lives.
 - i) This leads me to the classic story of "God's dilemma". I bet you didn't even know that God even had a dilemma. First let me explain how it applied to the Israelites back then and then I'll explain how it applies to us. God made an unconditional promise that He would give the land of Israel to them. At the same time, God will not tolerate His people being a bad witness for them. Therefore, He had to punish them even to the eventual point of kicking them out of that land until they do turn back to Him. That same difficult concept applies to us as well. In other words, He loves us way too much to ever leave us alone.
 - b) To put that in "Christian speak", giving our lives to Jesus cost us nothing and everything at the same time. It cost us nothing in that Jesus paid the complete price for every sin that we have or will ever commit. It cost us everything in that God the Father now desires to be in charge of every aspect of our lives. It's a moment by moment decision that we have to make to either live to please God with our lives out of gratitude for what He has done for us or to choose to turn from Him. That's God's dilemma for us: How do I show that I do love people and at the same time get their attention so that they can be a good witness for Me with their lives? That's why we should "fear God". Not to lose our salvation, but out of fear of losing our witness for Him. That's why the Israelites suffered in the stories in these chapters and that's why we have to learn to fear God with our own lives.
2. Speaking of the Israelites, let me explain what is going on in these chapters in a few thoughts:
 - a) The Israelites were suffering defeats from their enemies because they were not seeking Him as He desired. God had Elisha the prophet at the end of his life be a witness again to the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to have him defeat his enemies and turn back to God. The Southern Kingdom of Judah won a war against its enemies and now made the big mistake of wanting to conquer the Northern Kingdom not so they could all seek God together but just to get more power for the southern king. They lost that war and the "bad egg" of a king of the North did damage by taking gold and silver out of the temple used for God. There, that's a good summary of these two chapters and I didn't ask you to recite one king's name in that summary of these chapters!
 - b) All in all, it is not a happy pair of chapters. I'm not asking you to depress yourself to read these tragedies to learn history. The goal is to get each of us to understand how it is that God does judge the time He gives us as Christians. It's not as simple as avoid sin and just trust God to guide our lives. The great secret to living the Christian life is about learning to rely upon His power moment by moment in order to make that difference for Him and having that power to turn from what God does not desire of us.
 - c) In summary, I'm asking you to read through this lesson not to learn the tragedy of what happened to these kings that lived long ago. I'm asking you to consider how God judges us as we live our lives to make a difference for Him. With that said, time for the verses.

3. Chapter 13, Verse 1: In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years.² He did evil in the eyes of the LORD by following the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, and he did not turn away from them.³ So the LORD's anger burned against Israel, and for a long time he kept them under the power of Hazael king of Aram and Ben-Hadad his son.
- a) To start the story, let me give a little "who, what and where" type of background:
 - i) The story takes place in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. For my new readers, this is a time in history when the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom was called Judah and the northern kingdom was called Israel. Note the reference to both in Verse 1. Both are referenced as the date of the reign of the current king of Judah is used to mark the start of the reign of the latest king of the Northern Kingdom. Anyway, the "where" is the northern kingdom.
 - a) In our vocabulary, this is about 800 BC. Now you know the "when".
 - ii) The king of Israel was named Jehoahaz. As I love to state, all of the names confuse me as well and I'll keep the references to his name brief as not to confuse us.
 - b) Here is what you do need to know: This king is a bad egg. Verse 2 says that this king did evil in the sight of God. One simple rule to remember about reading the book of Kings is that no king in the Northern Kingdom is ever spoken about positively. When Israel first broke off into two kingdoms centuries earlier, the first king of the north was a man named Jeroboam, who is mentioned in verse 2. The point is he rebelled against God's desire that all the Israelites worship Him and Him alone.
 - i) Speaking of things you need to know as a Christian: There are two types of things that God does not approve of: One is the worship of false deities. That in effect is a violation of the first of the 10 commandments. The second thing is to worship God in a false way. That in effect is the rest of the 10 commandments. To put it simply, to claim to worship Him and then willfully choose to sin is an example of claiming to worship God but not doing what He commands of us. I state all of this as that is what both the current king of Israel and the original king was guilty of.
 - ii) To be specific the first king of Israel, made golden calves to say in effect, "These are the gods that lead you out of Egypt". The half-truth was God's name was used as to not deny the history that Israel came there from Egypt. The lie is that God is the same as an Egyptian based deity based on worship of a calf-god deity. The reason the first king set up this deity was to discourage Israelites from traveling south to the Southern Kingdom to worship God the way He desired them to do so. The sin of the current North king was that he encouraged the worship of the same statues again to keep people from traveling Southern Kingdom for religious holidays.
 - iii) OK John, and you are telling us all of this ancient history because? Because God cares how He is to be worshipped. That is why the bible is thicker than one page to keep it simple. The point is we are accountable to Him for our lives and God encourages us to be accountable to each other in order for us to live the way that He desires us to live.
 - c) All of this leads me back to the first few verses of this chapter. The king discourages the residents of Northern Israel to worship the true God of Israel. Because he did that, God made that nation suffer by allowing an enemy to conquer parts of that country.
 - i) If a week from now, you remember nothing from this lesson, just remember that there is a price to be paid from turning from God. That's what the Israelites had to learn here the hard way. The idea is that God loves us too much to leave us alone. If we willfully choose to turn from Him, He willfully allows bad things to occur in our lives if for no other reason, than for us to willfully turn back to Him.
 - ii) That is one reason why God allows suffering in the world. It is a way for God to get our collective attention and our focus back on Him in the first place.

- d) Now that we know that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was suffering at this time, as they were collectively turning from God and He is working to get their attention by allowing a king of Aram (think Syria today) to attack them, let's read what happens next.
4. Verse 4: Then Jehoahaz sought the LORD's favor, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. ⁵ The LORD provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped from the power of Aram. So the Israelites lived in their own homes as they had before. ⁶ But they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit; they continued in them. Also, the Asherah pole remained standing in Samaria.
- a) The point here is the suffering worked. The king of Israel repented and turned to God for help. Somehow and somehow God provided an unnamed deliver to help the Israelites so once again they lived in peace there. The sad part of the story is the fact that once they got relief from the enemy, they didn't change their lifestyle.
 - b) If you have ever studied the book of Judges, these few verses are a good summary of that book. The pattern of Judges is the Israelites turn from God. Then they suffer. Then they cry out to God who sends them relief. Once they get that relief, the Israelites then go back to living by ignoring God. Then the pattern starts again.
 - i) Stop and consider when we as a society or as individuals seek God the most: It is usually when we are suffering and are crying out for Help. When things are going well is when we ignore God and He has to do what He has to get our attention. The big question of course, is how do we break that bad pattern? Commitment. To have a heart for God, is about developing habits we stick with in good times and bad times. It is about praying and studying His word whether we feel like it or not. It is about making the effort to avoid sin and doing the right thing even if we don't feel His presence at any given moment.
 - c) All of that lecturing about doing the right thing whether we feel like it not, leads us back to life in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Even though the Israelites did realize that God delivered them from their enemy, they still worshipped God "any old way they felt like it" and still kept an Asherah pole standing. That pole is associated with Baal worship, which is an oversimplified explanation of what that was.
 - i) Remember that the sin of Jeroboam was he refused to let the Israelites living there go to Jerusalem to worship God in the Southern Kingdom out of fear that people might move there. That's why he built the golden calf statues. To put that in our vocabulary, it would be like saying we honor God, but never open our bibles. It would be like saying we believe Jesus died for our sins, but never living like it. If we are grateful for Jesus complete sin payment, we should turn from sin out of gratitude for what God has done for us. When we sin, it is like saying, "We don't care that God is watching us, I want to do this anyway". The idea of living the Christian life is the concept of "volunteer slavery", to choose to live under His domain and that is a moment by moment choice that we all have to make.
 - d) Again coming back to the Israelites, the key point is they didn't show gratitude to God for rescuing them, and went back to their old habits. With that stark reality stated, it is time to come back to the text.
5. Verse 7: Nothing had been left of the army of Jehoahaz except fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers, for the king of Aram had destroyed the rest and made them like the dust at threshing time. ⁸ As for the other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, all he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ⁹ Jehoahaz rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Jehoash his son succeeded him as king.
- a) The epilogue of this king that turned from God is that Israel's army was down in effect to a "handful", as the enemy had wiped out most of the soldiers. At this low point, the king of the moment died, and his son took over. As I've stated in past lessons, when this book was written, records of the kings were kept and if one wanted to study more, there it was.

- b) There is an interesting bit of background that is also being played out here. If you recall from a few lessons back, the previous king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was named Jehu who wiped out the family of the king before him because they all worshipped Baal. The point I'm making is God promised Jehu that his descendants would reign in Israel for four generations due to that act. (This is from 2nd Kings 10:30).
 - i) My point is despite the fact the king of the moment has left Israel's army in effect in ruins, no one overthrew that king, but his son took over just as it was told to the father and now the grandfather of the king of the moment.
 - ii) OK, how do we know that someone didn't add that comment in hindsight after the family did rule for four generations? The answer is to consider the unlikely of this actually happening. Usually when a king does something that allows their country to go horribly wrong, like their army being reduced to a minimum, then a king would be overthrown. In other words, it is possible that was added later, but not likely considering the situation.
 - iii) Again, back to God's perspective, if God knew this king was bad news, why did he allow Jehu's family to rule for four generations? If I had to guess, it is that God knew how this was going to play out, but God wanted to show them and us what are the long term consequences by turning from Him and that the story being told here in this text. Speaking of the text, time to get back to it.
- 6. Verse 10: In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. ¹¹ He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he continued in them.
 - a) If you have been with me throughout this study of "Kings", you might recall that I stated that the book has this strange habit of keeping time by using one kingdom to mark time for the other one. Without getting into a deep study of time, the short version is both 1st and 2nd Kings constantly makes statements like, "In the "x" year of this king of the South, this is when the next king of the North started to rule".
 - b) To translate that rule into this text, while the current king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was in his 37th year of ruling, time for another "bad egg" in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. To say it even another way, "like father, like son". When the current king's dad was the King of Israel, he caused the Israelites to not worship God the way He's supposed to be worshipped and now the king's son is doing the same thing.
 - c) In fact, that is all we need to know about this current king of the moment. He turned the people of the Northern Kingdom away from God and suffered for it. The only positive statement we'll read about this king is in effect an epilogue comment made after listing his death in the next few verses. Speaking of which:
- 7. Verse 12: As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ¹³ Jehoash rested with his fathers, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.
 - a) The final comments we get about this king is that he fought with the king of Judah during his reign and then he died. We also get the standard-by-now comment that if one wanted to learn more about that king, official records were available when "kings" was written. It's kind of like saying, "You want to learn more about this king, go to the library and read about him."
 - b) Then we get the comment that a man named Jeroboam was his son and took over as the king. In case you care, there was another king of the North with the same name. That's why some bibles call this guy "Jeroboam the Second" as to keep it straight. Since I'm not big on memorizing names, just know that God kept his promise about this family ruling for four generations. With that said, we now change topics.

8. Verse 14: Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"
- a) The last time Elisha's name was mentioned was back in Chapter 9, Verse 1. It's time for a quick refresher course on Elisha. In 1st and 2nd Kings, there were two great prophets that did lots of miracles and helped the Israelites draw closer to God. The first Elijah and his effective replacement was Elisha. Just as the letter "J" comes before the letter "S", so Elijah comes first, then Elisha. Each character is prominent for many chapters, and now we are about to read of the death of the second one.
 - b) Since it has been four chapters, commentators suspect that Elisha has not been as active in the later years of his life. It's kind of like the times in our lives when God goes silent on us in order to keep our focus on him. Either that or Elisha was thinking, "OK, these kings are turning from God, let's watch the consequences play out." For whatever the reason, there is no mention of Elisha for the past few chapters. I personally visualize Elisha as being an old man at this point in the story. He has now watched a handful of kings come and go.
 - c) Also notice the story backtracks a little. The king mentioned here in Verse 14, is the one who is listed as dead in Verse 13. The text is saying effect, "Before we wrap up the life of the king named Jehoash, let's report on his visit to the old prophet Elisha".
 - d) Before we talk about his encounter between the king and Elisha, stop and consider some of the miracles that Elisha did. He brought back someone from the dead. He told kings what was God's will for their lives and lead them closer to God. Yet the text clearly says that he was suffering from something that was going to lead to his death. Also recall that Elisha's hero was the former prophet Elijah. That prophet didn't die, but was just taken up to heaven in a way that can be described as being raptured into heaven. My point here is just that even though God was not done with Elijah as he is mentioned in the Gospels as well as hinted at in Revelation 11, Elisha's fate is different. He is going to die here as any other person has to face death. I'm sure Elisha's in heaven, but the point here is that he had to face death even though his life was used in a great way by God.
 - i) The lesson for all of us here is that we all have to face the reality of death.
 - ii) The question becomes, do we care more about living for the pleasure of this life or do we care more about serving God now for the benefit of all of eternity? Elisha is a great example of living for God and the eternal benefit of that choice.
 - e) OK, enough of all of that, back to the story. Obviously sometime before the last king died, he had this encounter with Elisha. Yes it marks the final appearance of Elisha and it also marks the last time Elisha will help a king do the right thing. The king says to Elisha "My father, my father". That confirms to me that Elisha was older here. The king was showing respect to Elisha as he helped his grandfather to rule over the Northern Kingdom. Then the king says, "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"
 - i) Time for some recall. Back when Elisha was about to be killed by a foreign king because Elisha was helping Israel win wars, God showed Elisha and his helper the angelic forces that exist all around us. Elisha then led a blinded enemy army into the capital city. This is all from 2nd Kings Chapter 6. My point is that this event occurred when the kings' grandfather ruled and the king knew the story. That is why we get this greeting of respect to Elisha.
 - ii) To translate this some more, the king was saying, "My army is now minimal due to the defeats suffered to the Syrians. Now that you Elisha are here, can you help me like you helped my grandfather many years ago?"
 - f) What is happening here, is the king is desperate for help. He is reaching out to this old man who the king knew was a God fearing man. It also shows that we can never be too young or too old to be used by God. Even if we are near death, God can and does still use us in order to be a witness to draw others closer to Him. With that said, time to read on.

9. Verse 15: Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and he did so. ¹⁶ "Take the bow in your hands," he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. ¹⁷ "Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek."
- Remember that the king's concern is that the size of his army is minimal as Israel had suffered defeats to the Arameans (again, think Syria). Elisha was showing in a symbolic way how the Israelites are now going to defeat this enemy.
 - With that said, Elisha told the king to symbolically shoot some arrows out the window pointing east. Since the Syrians lived to the east of them it was a way of saying go attack them as Israel will win the next war against them.
 - Anyway, picture Elisha as a weak, sick, old man, telling the king effectively, "I'm not done being a prophet for Israel. God's latest request is to tell you to go attack the enemy."
 - Time for another question to ponder. If this king was a "bad egg", why would God want to help him here? Part of the answer is that God cares about the residents of Israel, (that is, those who He has chosen to be with Him forever.) Therefore, God is doing what He can to draw them and us back to Him. In other words, God loves us too much to ever leave us alone and He's always willing to help us draw closer to Him despite whatever sin we have committed. When it comes to drawing close to Him, it is never too late. It can be too late as far as being a witness for Him, but actually drawing close to Him, never has a "you have sinned too much" stamp on us. My proof of that view is coming up later in this lesson. In the meantime, back to the bow and arrow story.
10. Verse 18: Then he said, "Take the arrows," and the king took them. Elisha told him, "Strike the ground." He struck it three times and stopped. ¹⁹ The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."
- When I prepared for this lesson, I was curious exactly how many arrows are in a quiver. For those who don't know, this is a bag used to carry one's arrows in battle. I checked a number of web sites and came to the conclusion there was no official answer back then.
 - The point here is that the king at that moment had access to a whole bunch of arrows. I don't know if a king's assistant had them ready for him or he was holding a quiver. The point is the king had more than three handy. This is significant because Elisha told the king to strike the ground as a symbolic act of destroying the "Syrians". Elisha wanted the king to shoot five or six arrows as after that many successful attacks, this nation would then be completely destroyed. It makes me wonder about modern Israel and how Syria today is an enemy of that country. It makes me wonder if this king did what Elisha had asked him to do, would Syria be a problem today? Who knows? The point of this story is the king did not do as Elisha asked him to do and Syria (or Aram, same place) remained an enemy because the king refused to keep shooting.
 - Time for a footnote. The text implies that the king should take the arrows and strike the ground with them. I'm convinced a better translation is that the arrows are to be shot to the ground and not "strike the ground". My point is just that since there are less words in Hebrew than in English it can be translated more than one way. I believe the correct way to translate this is about shooting the arrows to the ground and not just actual striking the ground with the arrows. (Yes it's trivial, but I wanted to mention it.)
 - I have to admit I've heard some interesting sermons on those arrows. Some argue that it is like praying. The idea is just as the king is to keep shooting, God wants us to keep on praying. Why is that? Didn't God hear us the first time? Of course. The reason we keep on praying over an issue is to show our commitment to keep on trusting God that He will work on His timing. It doesn't mean God will do our will. It comes back to the idea of keeping our commitment to Him no matter the circumstances in our lives at the moment.

- e) Anyway, for whatever the reason, the king shot three arrows out the east window. That symbolic act showed that the king was willing to attack Syria again. To state the obvious by now, it means that the Israelites will win three times as we'll read coming up.
 - f) In the meantime, it is time to read about the final act of Elisha as he dies.
11. Verse 20: Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring.²¹ Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.
- a) Time for John's very loose translation: Moabites were a separate nation from the Syrians. At the time of Elisha's death some Israelites encountered some Moabites on the "warpath". At the exact moment of this encounter, some Israelites were burying one of their own who just died. They happened to bury this man in the same plot of ground where Elisha was buried. When the dead man touched Elisha's dead body, the dead man came back to life.
 - b) This leaves me with the difficult job of explaining why this miracle occurred. Here goes:
 - i) The first thing to get is the connection between Elisha's prediction that Israel will defeat the Syrians three times and the dead being brought back to life. Remember earlier in the chapter it said that Israel's army was reduced to a small force. With a dead man coming back to life it is symbolic of the idea of an "all but dead" nation like Israel coming back to be a significant force that can defeat a larger enemy like the nation of Aram (i.e., Syria).
 - ii) The second thing has to do with Elisha having (asking for) twice the power that his predecessor Elijah had. If you've been with me through all of Kings, you may recall that Elijah told Elisha that if you see me be taken to heaven, you'll have what you asked for, which is twice Elijah's power. (See 1st Kings 2:10). A miracle that Elijah and Elisha each performed at separate times were bringing a person back from the dead. In this story of a dead man touching the dead body of Elisha, it fulfills the request of Elisha to have twice the power of Elijah by bringing two people back from the dead.
 - a) The simple point here is that God fulfilled His promise to Elisha.
 - c) I should also add that there have been some strange teachings in both the Roman Catholic world and the Pentecostal world based on this story. My view is that we should just take it at face value and tie to the rest of the chapter. Earlier Elisha predicted Israel's victory over its main enemy of the moment. A dead person being resurrected at a time when that nation was weak is a sign how God is resurrecting that nation (Northern Kingdom) to be great again despite it's failure to worship God the way He desires them too.
 - i) That thought leads well into the next few verses:
12. Verse 22: Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz.²³ But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence.
- a) Remember how I just said that Aram (or Syria, as we call it today) was oppressing Israel? That fact was alive and well at this moment. In effect, we are still backtracking to describe life during the reign of the king who's death was noted back in Verse 12 of this chapter.
 - b) The point here is that despite the fact that this king refused to worship God the way that God desires to be worshipped and the fact that the Israelites living there also refused to worship God that way, God Himself was unwilling to destroy that nation because God promised Abraham, his son Isaac and his son Jacob, that the land of Israel would be given to their descendants.
 - c) This leads me back to "God's dilemma". It is the idea of God's unconditional promises being mixed God's desire for obedience in our lives. The classical question is, how does God balance His desire for obedience with such an unconditional promise?

- i) The answer to that question, leads me back to my lesson introduction. To state the obvious in hindsight of history, Israel didn't remain a nation for millenniums. So therefore one has to understand that God's promise to give the territory associated with the nation of Israel was both a conditional and unconditional promise.
 - ii) Let me explain that better: It was unconditional in that God promised to give that land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At the same time, God had the right to hold that land "over their head" to state in effect, if you refuse to obey Me, I'll kick you out of this land as a desperate measure to get your attention.
 - iii) As we'll discover in a few more chapters, the Northern nation of Israel did come to an end. By the end of 2nd Kings, the Southern nation of Judah will also come to an end. The point being that the promise of Israelites occupying that land is an unconditional promise in the long run, God can and did hold that land as hostage if the Israelites refused to obey Him.
 - d) All of that theology leads me back to the text. The Northern nation of Israel hasn't gotten to the point where God has said, "I've had enough rebellion". Despite their failure to seek God the way He commanded them, He was still willing for the moment to let them exist as a nation. Thus the reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in these verses.
 - i) However, just because God wouldn't go that far yet, still does not mean He was going to let them get away with turning from Him. The other point of these verses is that the nation still had to suffer for turning from Him and God allowed another nation to suppress them.
 - e) What does any of this have to do with us? God desires a relationship with all people who are willing to seek Him. Think of it as a "carrot and a stick" approach. That just means we can be blessed if we seek Him and punished if we turn from Him like these Israelites. The simple way to explain this is, "If God can be this tough on those Israelites, what makes us think He's not willing to be equally as tough on us? That alone should scare us to stick to what God has called us to do: Trust in Jesus as His Son and rely upon the Spirit in order to make a difference for Him based on that belief. Ok enough guilt, back to the text.
13. Verse 24: Hazael king of Aram died, and Ben-Hadad his son succeeded him as king.²⁵ Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured from Ben-Hadad son of Hazael the towns he had taken in battle from his father Jehoahaz. Three times Jehoash defeated him, and so he recovered the Israelite towns.
- a) Here we see history moving on with God working as He planned in the background. The king of Aram who oppressed Israel died and his son took over. Around the same time, we had a change of kings in Israel and to make it simple, the Israelites defeated Aram exactly three times just as Elisha predicted before his death.
 - b) For those of you who like history, this was the time of the Assyrian Empire. They are a separate group from Syria (Aram) who was rising to power. The point is Assyria was also battling Syria and that conflict helped Israel to win these battles with Aram.
 - c) Does that mean that the Israelites used God as an excuse while it was really the Assyrians that made it possible for the Israelites to win these three battles? Of course not. Again it's best to see history as God working in the background to manipulate things as He desires. Also God at times reveals history in advance to us, as He did in this chapter by having Elisha tell the king of Israel he will defeat the Syrians exactly three times and no more.
 - d) Coming back to my introduction, the point is the way God often deals with us is by Him working in the background of our lives like He does in this story here. Like the Israelites we too have the unconditional promise that we can't lose our salvation as long as we are trusting that Jesus made the complete payment for all our sins, past present and future. We also have the conditional promise that God can take away our witness for Him if we willfully choose to disobey Him. On that difficult note, we're going to take on one more chapter in this lesson. Time to get started.

14. Chapter 14, Verse 1: In the second year of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah began to reign.² He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Jehoaddin; she was from Jerusalem.³ He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done. In everything he followed the example of his father Joash.⁴ The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.
- a) Time to switch gears from life in the Northern Kingdom to life in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Let me give a little background of what was happening in Judah that lead up to this verse. The last king was named Joash. If you were with me in the last lesson, he was the one who became king as a boy when his wicked grandmother was killing anyone who was of the royal line of David. Some people conspired to hide Joash as a baby and when he was nine (if my memory is correct) he became king. Anyway, Joash lived out a full life as a king and now we are reading of one of his son's named Amaziah being the next king.
 - i) You may also recall that his father was murdered. The end of Chapter 12 said that Joash was murdered probably because he gave away much of the Temple gold in order to buy off an invading army and he turned from God later in life. I find it amazing to consider despite what his father did, the killers still let Joash's son be the next king. My point is just that God's word remained true how a descendant of David remained in power here for centuries despite all sorts of issues.
 - b) With that said, here are some key facts about the king of the moment. He started out at the age of 25 and ruled for 29 years. His mother was from Jerusalem, which probably just means a God fearing woman raised this king. For the most part, this was a good king in that he lived a life pleasing to God. A key exception that gets me back to my introduction is that he still allowed people to worship God "any old way they felt like it". To say that in plain English, instead of going through the priestly system that God desired, people of Judah went wherever they felt like in order to worship God.
 - i) This leads me back to the question, why can't we worship God anyplace we want to? After all, if I trust Jesus paid the complete price of my sins, why can't I stay at home on Sundays, enjoy my life and just pray here? The point is if we are grateful for our salvation, we follow through and do something about it. God wants us to be accountable to each other and be a living witness for Him. It's tough to do that if we are seeking God any old way we feel like it. Think of these people going to the high places to honor God as saying in effect, "I don't want to be accountable to the Jewish priests so I'll avoid them and do what I want." That's the idea here.
 - c) This leads back to the king of the moment. Being a king, he could have made that practice illegal. Instead he tolerated it. It's a way of thinking I don't want people to rebel against me so I'll tolerate this. Often leadership requires making tough decisions instead of just giving people what they want. Wit that said, back to the story.
15. Verse 5: After the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, he executed the officials who had murdered his father the king.⁶ Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the LORD commanded: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins."
- a) Time for another of my loose translations: To honor the king's father, the current king had put to death the people who put his father to death. As I stated earlier, some people put the previous king to death most likely because that king turned from God or because that king gave away most of the temple assets. Even with that act done, murder is not to be tolerated and the current king killed the conspirators, but not their families.
 - b) Then the text cites Deuteronomy 24:16, which states that children should not be punished for the sins of their parents. The text also calls that book, "The Law of Moses". The text is showing us that whoever wrote Kings believed Moses was the author of that book.

- i) I mention that fact as there have been a lot of bible critics over the millenniums who deny that Moses was the author. Here the bible itself, many centuries after the first five books were written site Moses as the author. My favorite proof on that issue is that Jesus Himself quotes from all five of the books attributed to Moses (first five of the bible) and claimed Moses was the author. As it is said, if you don't believe Jesus' words to be true, you have much bigger problems than whether or not Moses was the author of the first five books of the bible.
 - c) Anyway, as the current king, he could have killed the whole family of those who killed the king's father. However, the current king knew enough about Moses law to want to obey it and only killed the murderers for it.
- 16. Verse 7: He was the one who defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela in battle, calling it Joktheel, the name it has to this day.
 - a) In 2nd Chronicles Chapter 25 we get more details of this story. To make it simple, Judah raised a huge army. The king also hired mercenary soldiers from the Northern Kingdom. God told this king to not use those mercenary soldiers and the king paid off that foreign army who then went back home angry that they didn't get to do their job. A traditional enemy of Judah was a neighboring country called Edom. This is part of Jordan today.
 - b) The point is Judah defeated them by the Dead Sea which is an area filled with salt. All the text says here is a key moment in the current king's life is he won that battle. The reason it is brought up here, is it ties to the next story beginning in the next verse.
- 17. Verse 8: Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, with the challenge: "Come, meet me face to face." ⁹ But Jehoash king of Israel replied to Amaziah king of Judah: "A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle underfoot." ¹⁰ You have indeed defeated Edom and now you are arrogant. Glory in your victory, but stay at home! Why ask for trouble and cause your own downfall and that of Judah also?"
 - a) If you have ever watched boxers give a press conference before a big fight, they'll spend time taunting their opponent. It doesn't matter if they mean it. They do this act to draw interest in the fight and to try to mentally bother their opponent. They do this in other sports too, but it is most common in big boxing matches. I bring that up, as that in effect is what we have here. Let me explain:
 - i) The king of Judah was excited that he had defeated the Edomites. Now he thinks he can take on the other Israelites living in the Northern nation of Israel. I don't know his motivation. Maybe he was power hungry or thought that he could unite the nation like his ancestor David did.
 - ii) By this point in history, the northern kingdom of Israel had grown strong again as it had defeated Syria three times. I assume their army grew in size too. The king of Israel was taunting the king of Judah like a boxer preparing for a fight.
 - iii) To paraphrase the king of the Northern Kingdom, "You in Judah think you are big shots because you won that war against Edom. However, we in Israel are a much bigger force. Go home, enjoy your victory over Edom, but don't bother to set your heart on defeating the Northern Nation of Israel.
 - iv) My point is as you read this text here, read it as a big set of "tauntings" by the king of the North in order to discourage the king of the South from attacking.
 - b) This leads me back to my lesson introduction: How do you think God feels about those He cares about wanting to kill each other for power? God desires that all the Israelites turn to Him for protection, not to kill each other to see who is the most powerful king. To put this in our vocabulary, it is one thing to go to war to stop oppression, stop a tyrant or say to end a bad practice like slavery. It's another to kill people just to want power. In other words, this idea is a bad one and we'll see the consequences of it play out here:

18. Verse 11: Amaziah, however, would not listen, so Jehoash king of Israel attacked. He and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth Shemesh in Judah. ¹² Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled to his home. ¹³ Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh. Then Jehoash went to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate--a section about six hundred feet long. ¹⁴ He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria.
- a) The bottom line here is the battle still took place between the two kings. The king of the north was far more powerful at this point in history and won the battle. The damage of this battle was that a good section of the wall around Jerusalem was destroyed and whatever gold and silver was still in God's temple was taken out and taken north.
 - b) Now stop and think about this war from God's perspective. To state the obvious, God did not want His people to fight each other. God also desired that the temple in Jerusalem be a central place of worship of Him.
 - i) To keep it simple, remember that no king of the Northern Kingdom was ever truly a God fearing man and all of them were described in effect as "bad egg's". Over a good chunk of First and Second Kings, God had prophets working in the Northern Kingdom to try to get the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom to turn back to him. With that said, we read here of the king of the Northern Kingdom destroying part of the Jerusalem city wall and taking away the gold and silver in the temple. Even though it is not stated in the text as such, one can just picture God not being happy about this and consequences are about to happen because of it.
 - c) Moral of the story: Don't mess with God or those who serve Him. Dire consequences. In the meantime, it's time to get back to the story of the kings of both countries.
19. Verse 15: As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, what he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ¹⁶ Jehoash rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. And Jeroboam his son succeeded him as king.
- a) The text now moves back to the Northern Kingdom. To make it simple, the text says the king of the North who won that battle eventually died and the records of that king which apparently were available to study when Kings was written record more about that king.
 - b) In effect, the only thing "Kings" wanted to point about the latest king of the North is that he faced the current king of the South in battle and did the damage as already stated.
 - c) Verse 16 mentions the next king of the North called Jeroboam. As I said earlier, many study bibles call him "Jeroboam the Second" as there was a previous king by that name.
 - d) One reason Jeroboam II is mentioned here is to show that God kept his word to the great grandfather that his family would rule for four generations. (Again, 2nd Kings 10:30.)
 - e) Speaking of epilogue's after king's death, time to give another one for the South:
20. Verse 17: Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel. ¹⁸ As for the other events of Amaziah's reign, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?
- a) If all of this "This king lived for x number of years" text is confusing, we all agree. To be honest, I've read kings many times over the years and the names still confuse me. I hold the view that learning the names is not as important as learning the principals behind the stories as told in the book.
 - b) With that said, the current king of the moment of the Southern Kingdom eventually died and the records of that king were around when the book of Kings was compiled.
 - c) What is to be learned is that there are consequences to "mess with God". God didn't want all of Israel to be united under any king other than when The Messiah comes on the scene. That's what we call Jesus Second Coming. We read here of the damage of going against God's will with the Israelites fighting each other.

21. Verse 19: They conspired against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish, but they sent men after him to Lachish and killed him there.²⁰ He was brought back by horse and was buried in Jerusalem with his fathers, in the City of David.²¹ Then all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah.²² He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his fathers.
- a) The point here is the current king of the South was killed, probably because he lost the war. The people of the Southern Kingdom then let that king's son reign. I admit I find it fascinating that despite all of the killing of kings of the Southern Kingdom, the people still wanted a descendant of David to be the next king. It shows the desire by that nation for "The Messiah" to come.
 - b) Let's face it. People want power. Look how many run for political office. Yet despite that desire, the people of Judah were still willing to let a descendant of David be the next king in hopes of "The Messiah" coming on the scene. It also shows God was still working in order for His will to be done.
 - c) Let me quickly pause to ask the question: Why didn't God the Father pick that time in history to have Jesus come in the world? After all, Israelites were living in the land, and I'm sure God could have worked it out for Jesus to rule the world from Israel at that time. Part of the answer was a lack of commitment by the Israelites to serve God. Remember that they were still worshipping God "any old way and place they felt like it". Part of the consequences for that sin was The Messiah didn't come on the scene at that time.
 - i) Also know that one reason Jesus came when he did was the Roman Empire was at its peak when Paul was spreading Christianity. However, I still have seven more verses to go and it's time to get back to the lesson.
22. Verse 23: In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years.²⁴ He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit.²⁵ He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.
- a) These verses summarize the reign of the "Jeroboam the Second" in the Northern Kingdom. All you really need to know was that he was another "bad egg" as this king discouraged the Israelites to worship God the way He desired them to be worshipped like the kings that came before him.
 - b) Here comes the "but": However, God still cared about the Israelites who lived there. At the time of that king, Northern Israel increased its boundary and a big part of that reason is that they listened to a prophet of God named Jonah. Yes it's the same Jonah as in the book of Jonah. We know that as the full name of Jonah given here is the same as the one given in Jonah 1:1. The point being that the king of the Northern Kingdom did do some good things in that he listened to Jonah and increased the size of his kingdom based on that obedience. The "but" is the fact the king still rebelled against God just as all of the kings of the Northern Kingdom did. The text mentions the first king of the Northern Kingdom to say in effect, "the current king is no better than the first one". That's the "but".
23. Verse 26: The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them.²⁷ And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.
- a) These final chapter verses lead us right back to the lesson theme of "How God deals with us." To put it simply, God loves us too much to ever leave us alone. In context of these verses, the point is that God was aware how much the average Israelite was suffering due to the actions of "Jeroboam the Second". Like every other king in the North, he was a bad egg. At the same time, God is saying, "I love these people and I will do what I have to do in order to draw them back to Me." For His name sake, God helped the Israelites here.

- b) Let me explain these verses a little better. We are now three chapters away from the end of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Israelites wrongly thought that God would never wipe them out from being a nation. That's their interpretation of living in that land.
 - i) What we often miss as Christians is God cares about us too much to let us ever get away with sin. That's why judgment on this nation occurred back then and that is why we as Christians must always fear His judgment even though we are saved. The issue is not losing our salvation, but losing our witness for Him. That is what is causing the suffering in Israel at this point in history and that is what we must learn from history in order to be a good witness for God. Since I'm at the final few verses of this lesson, let me comment on those verses and I'll talk about how we do be a good witness for Him in my closing prayer.
24. Verse 28: As for the other events of Jeroboam's reign, all he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Yaudi, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ²⁹ Jeroboam rested with his fathers, the kings of Israel. And Zechariah his son succeeded him as king.
- a) The point is the king accomplished some military victories in his life and at one time one could read about those in the national records. However, the main purpose of studying the book of Kings is not to learn about the accomplishments and failures of these kings as people, but to learn how they lived their lives apply to us. Translation: Whether we have great power like a king or not, God calls on us to make a difference for Him by using our lives for His glory. With that tough comment made, we read here of the death of the king of the moment and another "bad egg" will start up in the next chapter.
 - b) In the meantime, let me wrap up this difficult lesson by talking about what God desires of us as believers not to earn salvation, but just to show the best way to live out the time that God has given us to live here on earth:
25. Father, we are all aware that we are given an unknown amount of time to live. We can use that time to just enrich our own lives or we can use that time to make a difference for You. Make it obvious to each of us how You desire we use our time. Help us not to waste the most valuable thing You give us, our time in order to make that difference for You. Like these kings, we don't always know how You are working in our lives, but we trust that You are there and are guiding us for Your glory. Help us to be obedient not to earn points with You, but simply because we are grateful for the salvation You have given us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.