

2 Kings 13:14-20 – God’s End

Ian Fraser to King of Kings Church - 7th August 2022

Reading

“2Ki 13:14 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!" 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.

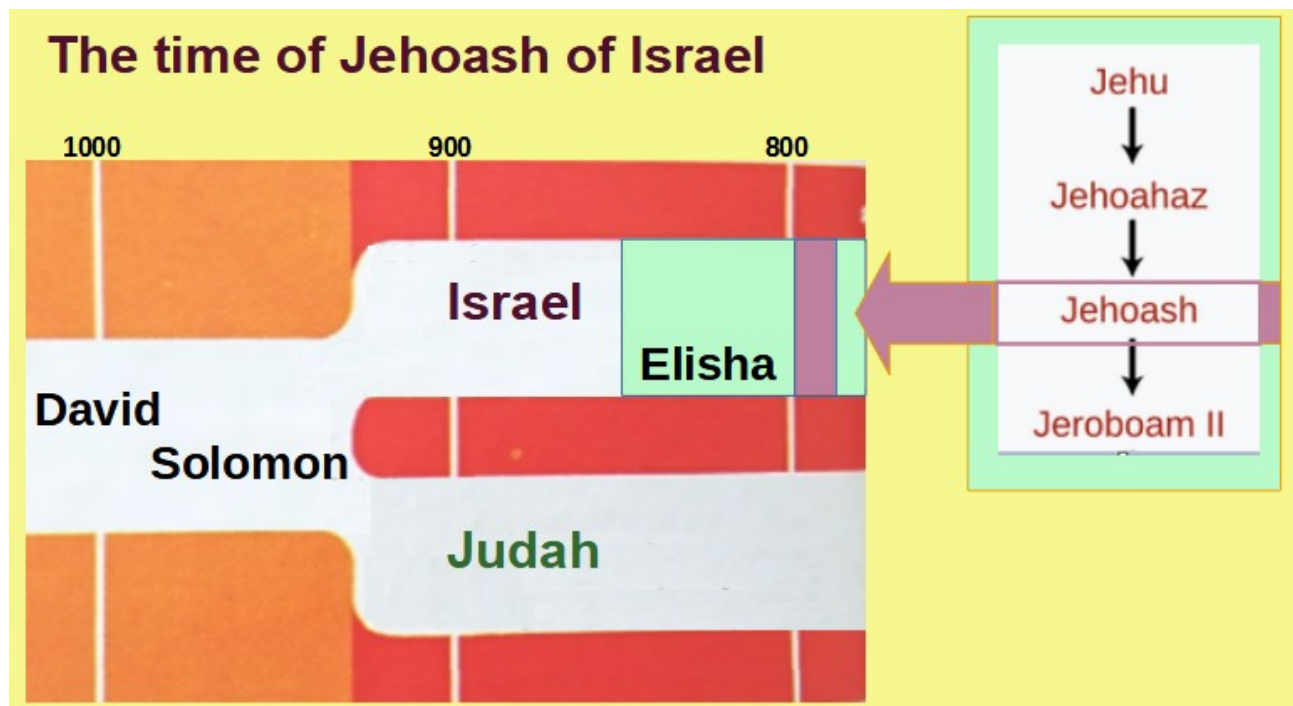
"The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek."

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." 20 Elisha died and was buried.” (New International Version, 1984)

Time map



Introduction

To introduce what we getting into in this passage, work briefly with me quickly on two thought exercises:

(1) What if you knew that someone was going to come to you on Wednesday morning and say something like this. "I've landed in a situation, and I need someone to pray with me. You're the person who came to mind. Please pray with me": What would you have to go through to be ready to receive that person on Wednesday?

(2) What if you landed in a situation tomorrow; and you knew that on Wednesday God had an answer for you, but you

needed to get your head and heart into a space that would be ready for whatever God had for you: What would you have to go through, in your head and heart, to be ready for God's answer for you on Wednesday?

The Scripture we are looking at is a "Wednesday" event.

The first thing to note from this passage of Scripture is...

1. God's wants an open door arrangement (v14)

"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!" (13:14)

This verse leads us to see, first of all, that God has a door open for us to come to Him at any time. On that basis, He we may become an open door to those God is inviting and drawing to Himself.

Jehoash had landed with a greatly reduced nation, from his father Jehoahaz. This nation was no match for the aggressive Aram, and was pitifully one percent of the army that David handed over to Solomon, two hundred years earlier. In his desperation, Jehoash sought out the LORD God of Israel, and visited Elisha in the hope of God's answer to the need of the nation.

He found the door wide open to him. Elisha not only received him but was immediately ready for him. This is the

good news we learn about God. “The LORD is near to all who seek Him; who seek Him in truth” (Psalm 145:18); We are encouraged by the preacher of the book of Hebrews. “The one who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Not only is God’s door wide open to those who want to turn from a past that rejected Him, but He is indeed the one who prompted Jehoshaphat to seek Him out. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life in our place, that we might be reconciled to God, by faith, who stands at the door of our hearts, knocking, with the promise, “See, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and will dine with that one and that one with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The first open door arrangement of this verse 14 is the open door the Lord has for us, as Elisha symbolized God’s open door for Jehoshaphat. The second open door arrangement is that we need to have an open door arrangement for Christ, that we may receive all He has for us.

But there is another open door arrangement that God wants with us, as indicated in this verse. It is this. As Elisha was not only a completely open door with God, he was also immediately open for the likes of Jehoshaphat. This is like the Wednesday event I asked you to think about. Elisha was immediately in the condition with God to be in line with what God had through Elisha for Jehoshaphat.

Think about the importance of this? Imagine God having an open door for you? Imagine you having a wide open door for Christ, so that, in His full fellowship He is pleased to make you an open door for those who need His word and work in their lives? This is the start of being an influence for Christ in the world into which God has placed you. This is where our story begins.

1. God loves an **open door** arrangement (v14)

Imagine, when people come to you
they are actually wanting God!

Imagine people coming to you because they are wanting God! This is why Jehoash came to Elisha.

Jehoash recognized that God's Word lived in Elisha. And Elisha's greatest joy was God's Word as his life. As Moses reminded the Israelites who had endured so much deprivation in the desert, after being delivered out of Egypt's slavery, *"No one will live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Deuteronomy 8:3). If you live by God's Word, by faith, you will live in God's peace and calling. When you hold God's Word to heart, trust Him not only for His assurance, but also that others may well be blessed through you.

Imagine people coming to you because they know that your relationship with God carries something that feeds their soul and meets their need? Even if you come from a troubled past, remember what God accomplished through Jacob, who had fled from his past. For fourteen years or more, Jacob had served under Laban's difficult rule. But Jacob had come to

live and thrive on the Word and promise of God. Laban said eventually to Jacob, “I have come to learn that God has blessed me because of you” (Gen. 30:27). Similarly, Jehoash saw in Elisha the Word of God that was his life and mercy and help. He gave him the same greeting that Elisha had given to Elijah: “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” - The sign of the presence and power of God!

Can you see the encouragement of this for your own relevance and influence in the world God has placed you? The Apostle Paul encouraged the Colossian church, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you speak to one another in beneficial ways” (Colossians 3:16). The Apostle Peter saw the importance of being an open door to others when he said, “Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you” (1 Peter 3:15 – Good News Bible). Similarly, Paul urged Timothy, “Deliver the Word [of God]; be instantly ready [have an open door] in season and out of season” (adapted from 2 Timothy 4:2).

This is the challenge to us about God having and wanting an open door arrangement with us and with those He is reaching and touching. Can we let these thoughts do their work in our hearts?

Recap: Not only are we to learn here that...

1. God’s wants an open door arrangement (v14)

... but also

2. God’s way is the deal (verses 15 to 18a)

When we read this section in English, it doesn't carry the electrifying drama that was being played out in Elisha's home. The Hebrew cracks the events like automatic gunfire, with each shot fired from Elisha responded like an echo from Jehoash's obedience. I will try and convey what seems to be the symbolic drama of the moment. It was a a crash course in how to work with God. The narrative explodes with one command after another, with Elisha right there with Jehoash, teaching him how to work with Yahweh:

Scene 1

Get a bow and arrows He got a bow and arrows (v15)
Place your hand on the bow He placed his hand on the bow
> *Dramatic pause, giving encouragement and good news:*
Elisha put his hands on the hands of the king (v16)

Scene 2

Open the window eastward He opened [it eastward]
Shoot! He shot!

> *Dramatic pause:*

That's an arrow of Salvation to Yahweh

That's an arrow of victory over Aram

> *"you shall strike the Syrians in Aphek, until it is finished" –*
This declaration was important!

Scene 3

Take the arrows (a quiver full) He took [them]
Strike [them] earthward He struck [them earthward]
> *Dramatic pause (which will be dealt with in the next point).*

What we have here is a dramatic work of Elisha in three scenes, synchronizing Jehoash with God, action by action, training him to be with God move by move, step by step.

This is exceedingly important if we are to do God’s will God’s way, breaking the habits of a broken past. Some have described it as a dance, with the Lord taking the lead.

The point about Elisha putting his hands on the king’s hands is exceedingly important for us. Elisha’s hands on Jehoash’s hands represented the power of God on Jehoash’s leadership and army. Let us go deeper into this.

We don’t need God only when we are in trouble. We need the power of God on what we have and are as a basic norm for all of life. We need God because we are at the top of our game; we need God’s power when we are the best in the world at what we do; we need God’s hand on our work when we have everything we need; we need God in our lives when we are completely successful and are accomplishing more than we dreamed. We need God when we are number one in the nation; we need God when we are happy and want for nothing! Why? Because, without the power of God it all amounts to nothing of eternal value in the end. Life is about God’s End – God’s Way. Anything less, we are fooling ourselves.

“Get a bow & arrows”	He got a bow and arrows
“Put your hand on the bow”	He put his hand
“Open the window eastward”	He opened it
“Shoot!”	He shot!
“Take the arrows”	He took
“Strike [them] earthward”	He struck

This is a lesson of learning to walk in nearer and dearer relationship with Christ, in the same way as Paul indicates when he says, after describing the how the fruit of the Spirit works in our lives, “If we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

There is much here to be discussed practically, but we have to leave that to your small group interactions.

Recap:

1. **God wants an open door arrangement (v14)**
2. **God's way is the Deal (vv15-18)**

3. God's win is the goal

Something startling happened when Jehoash struck the dirt.

"18 Elisha had 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.""
(vv18, 19).

Anyone with the slightest understanding of military strategy would know that when Jehoash stopped at three shots, he had done the unthinkable. Jehoash was content with a half-job. He would have clearly known that defeating Aram three times would not make an end of Aram. Yet this is what Elisha had said that Yahweh was giving to him. The complete end of the destructive enemy, as David had grasped about Goliath and the Philistines. But Jehoash found himself without the heart to make a full end of those who were determined to make an end of him and Israel. Incredulous. Elisha was angry!

What speaks to us today about this state of heart? The lesson

for our day may be applied in this way. Do we not need to question whether our zeal matches God's or not?

We are too easily pleased?

To do God's will God's way requires a zeal to finish how God wants His will to be finished. This is a call to keep going what God keeps going, to continue to pursue what God is pursuing, to press through to the goal that God is accomplishing.

Is it possible that our idea of "good enough" is, according to God, not really good enough at all? Is God as angry with our "good enough" as Elijah was with Jehoash's? Are we too easily satisfied with the first signs of breakthrough? Might we too easily recline in the joys of our own makings? Might we well ask if our desires are even worth taking seriously? Can we allow our desires and goals to be questioned? What, before Almighty God do we actually long for?

CS Lewis said, in one of the greatest sermons he preached,

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased" (C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*).

Have we the burning of God's longings in us that unsettles us until His peace affirms the job well done?

Are we too easily pleased?

It would seem that Jehoash is a lesson to us that the anger of God may not be because He is upset with our desires and wants, but that His anger is that we make too little of Him; that we long for lesser things, and that our zeal under His hand is far too cool. Our own idea of a finish might be an insult to His power; and our settling for mediocre outcomes might not get us to the destination He has in mind.

The joy of completion (as per David)

What is the answer? Kings constantly holds David as the standard for understanding how things should be viewed. In the books of Kings David is recalled 78 times, after his death. 10 times a king is compared to how David had lived in his relationship to God. Why was David such an important reference point? It was because he went the whole way with the LORD. Even Paul recalls, “After removing Saul, God made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do **everything** I want him to do.’” (Acts 13:22). Jehoash couldn't bring himself to that kind of heart. Let's go a little deeper into this.

There is a huge encouragement for us from the life and example of David, when we look for an answer to what Jehoash failed to do.

When David faced Goliath, he picked up five stones from the

stream, on his way to face the fight against this giant. Here's a question. Did he pick up 5 stones because he was afraid he would miss? Not a chance. There was no risk of missing, because of his excellence and mastery of his skill. In those days those who mastered the sling could aim at a hair and not miss (cf. Judges 20:16). No, David took five stones because he was prepared to do what Jehoash could not bring himself to do. He would strike again, again, again, again, and again until what needed done was accomplished, whether to Goliath or anyone else who got in the way. That's what Paul noted in Acts 13:22.

When Christ Jesus says to the church at Sardis, "I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God" (Revelation 3:2), He is pointing to a "good enough" attitude – one that relies on reputation and past achievements rather than on reaching the goal for all its worth.

With God's hand on you, as it was on Jehoash, would you see yourself adopting Elisha's zeal, renewing with the fire and zeal of the Holy Spirit that in the strength of Christ you will see His End as your End, His goal as your goal, His glory as your greatest delight, His face your most passionate pleasure?

- > Here, at this Communion Table, we remember Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the majesty of Heaven" (Hebrews 12:2). Here at the Cross, we eat and drink, delighting in all that He is to us, repenting of any "good enough" attitudes that rely on the past. Here we take the bread and cup seeking the renewal in Him we need. Amen.