

June 15

2 Kings 13-14 & 2 Chronicles 25

There are three questions that come to mind after reading our chapters for today.

1. Why do we read repeatedly that the kings of Judah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” but then also read that they did not remove the high places of sacrifice and burnt incense? Isn’t that a contradiction?
2. What’s up with the story of Elisha’s bones raising a man to life?
3. How come we read that “the Lord is not with Israel” in one situation when the King of Judah is assembling his army and then later find that God granted Israel a victory over Judah?

In addressing the first question I agree it does seem odd that the good kings of Judah are said repeatedly to have walked in the ways of their godly predecessors (or even David) BUT we are told time and time again that though they worshipped God and sought to obey Him, they did not remove the high places. So the question begs, why not? I can't believe that it didn't dawn on Asa and Jehoshaphat or Amaziah that this was really important to God. In fact we know from the differences between the Kings and Chronicles accounts that the godly kings of Judah did start removing the pagan places of worship, but they never finished the job -- why not? I know that I can only offer you an opinion on this point, but I think that they must have faced the same kind of criticism that we often hear when we get too zealous for the name of the Lord our God. "What makes you Christians think that you have a corner on truth?" Has anyone ever asked you that question? Or said, wait a minute, it's all well and good for you to believe in Jesus but that doesn't give you any right to impose your beliefs onto me... You see it is one thing to expect, and demand the right to worship God in the way that we believe we ought. It is quite another thing to demand that everyone else worship Him in exactly the same way. In fact, it seems almost wrong. After all, if what you have been fighting for is the freedom to worship God in your way, how can you then turn around and insist that everyone else do this your way? I am guessing that the good kings of Israel were grappling with some of the very same issues that we face. They wanted very much to promote the worship of the one true God, but they were perhaps reluctant to prohibit the worship of false gods because they were afraid of imposing their belief structures on other people.

In thinking about today, we must be careful to be gracious about the way in which we approach those who do not share our beliefs and our world view, yet we cannot escape the recognition that we are called upon to promote -- to passionately promote a very exclusive truth claim. God wants you and me to be unashamed about His message in a world that only wants to live and let live. The kings of Judah seemed to compromise when it came to wholeheartedly

standing for the worship of the one and only God. Friends, let's pray that we will be followers of Jesus that will be completely devoted to Christ regardless of what other's around us may believe.

Moving onto to question 2...the miraculous bones of Elisha!

Israelite mourners burying a man,
startled by a band of raiders, "HEY YOU, what are you doing, give me your stuff!"

out of desperation they toss the dead guy into Elisha's tomb for a temporary fix,

and freak-out of all freak outs, he is revived and stands up...

"Hey, anyone want to order Chinese? I am starving!"

This story is bizarre and unfortunately after looking at least 5 commentaries there aren't very convincing explanations for the passage. It is interesting to note that resurrecting power came from Elisha's dead body...and in the Old Testament law any dead body was considered unclean. So if Elisha's body was considered unclean, how did it perform something miraculous? Here we have two dead, unclean things that touch each other and one is raised to life? It makes me think of the story in the New Testament when a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years(definitely considered unclean) touched Jesus and was made well. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean, the woman was made clean by touching a holy God. Now I am not claiming then that Elisha was like God, but he was a righteous man and one who had been given the power to do the miraculous while he lived. Perhaps God still moved powerfully through him even after his death? I guess this may be another question I will want to ask God someday when I get to heaven. "So God, what was up with Elisha's bones raising a guy to life anyway?"

Last question of the day – How come God granted Israel victory over Judah?

In II Chronicles we read about the fact that Amaziah of Judah waged war against Jehoash of Israel and that he lost. When you read that, did it strike you as somewhat odd? It did me -- because the writer of Kings tells us that Jehoash of Israel -- despite the fact that he apparently held Elisha in some high esteem and did cry out at least once in his reign to the Lord for deliverance and attempt something that looked a little like repentance, was -- like every one of his predecessors in Israel, an evil king. The same chapter however told us that Amaziah -- Joash's son, was a good king. Not as good as David, but like Joash his father, he started well and held to the worship of Jehovah (though he did not remove the high places)

Amaziah's first military venture was against Edom. He planned the campaign himself and hired 100,000 mercenaries from Israel to pull it off. Then God's prophet shows up. Who was it? Not quite sure. Probably it was just another unnamed man of God. But God's prophet delivers a message – “The Lord is not with Israel...if you take any of them into battle, you'll lose.” Amaziah's response is predictable -- but what about all the money I paid? But in the end he obeys -- he marches with a much smaller army -- and he wins! But then he brings back the plunder and along with it the idols of the Edomites and, can you believe this? He sets up the Edomites idols as his own. He commits idolatry and God is angered. Amaziah's idolatry took him out from under the protection of God and he was too dumb to realize it. He declares war on Jehoash of Israel, marches into battle and gets smacked down! and gets captured and watches as the armies of Samaria break down the wall of Jerusalem and sack the palace and temple treasuries.

From this story and many others we have learned by now that in the Bible at least, victory or defeat in battle has very little to do with superficial things like troop size, weapon superiority or battle plans. It has everything to do with righteousness or unrighteousness before God.

I don't know what battles you are facing today- at work, with family, with your internal world, but I do know that your chances of victory stand closely aligned with your relationship and faithfulness to God. May you win every victory by his power!