

## Inevitable Tragedy of Evil Rulers

Not unlike Israel, the USA and other countries continue to fall prey to the corruption of evil leaders in government positions of power. One gets rather tired of reading statements in Scripture like, "*and 'so and so' did evil in the eyes of the Lord,*" as a repetitive and exasperating label for too many kings then.

In 2 Kings, we read of: the death of King Ahaziah, the fire that God sent to consume 100 of Ahaziah's disrespectful soldiers toward Elijah (only the third 50 were spared because they approached Elijah with deep respect), the *translation* of the prophet Elijah and the ministry of Elisha. It is interesting to note that Elisha asked from Elijah that he (Elisha) might receive a *double* portion of anointing that Elijah had on his life and ministry. Elijah could not specifically say that Elisha's prayer would be answered but provided a way for that to happen. Should Elisha see Elijah leave this life to the next, Elisha would indeed receive a double blessing. Elijah's miracles numbered 8, while Elisha's numbered 16.

Just prior to Elijah's *translation*, the two prophets were together. All of a sudden, seeing chariots and horses of fire (2 Kings 2:11), a whirlwind took Elijah up into heaven. Elijah did not experience death, just as Enoch long before him had not (Genesis 5:24). As a quick aside, imagine how bad society must have been during the time of Enoch for God to actually take Enoch out of this world/life, translating him directly to heaven. It appears we may be at or near that same point in society today.

Elisha, who then took up Elijah's mantle (cloak), he had left behind, continues where Elijah left off. As Elisha travels from there, he parts the waters of the Jordan River, as Elijah had done just prior (2 Kings 2:13-14). Elisha's next miracle was regarding the waters of Jericho. Apparently, they were bitter (contaminated), so Elisha healed the waters.

We then read of a sad situation where "little children" made fun of Elisha and insulted God, resulting in Elisha calling down a curse on those "little children." Numerous commentators have pointed out that the original Hebrew *can* mean very young children, but it can also mean older single young men and was so used in other places of Scripture as well.

In all likelihood, these "little children" were adolescents or even young men under the age of 30. They were probably followers of Baal. They insulted Elisha by calling him "bald" and blasphemed God by ridiculing what Elisha had told others, that Elijah had "gone up" to heaven. Elisha chose to refer the matter to God and asked God to "curse" them. God sent a few bears to tear them apart. It is possible God spoke *through* Elisha here. I doubt that God would have honored this if it had not first come from Him (cf 2 Peter 1:21).

Chapter 3 of 2 Kings introduces us to several more evil kings. The first is Jehoram the son of Ahab, although apparently, he was not quite as bad as his parents, Ahab and Jezebel.

*And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. (2 Kings 3:2 KJV)*

Jehoram did get rid of the image of Baal from Ahab's reign. Nonetheless, Jehoram committed the same types of sins favored by Jeroboam, the son of Nabat. Jeroboam was the first king after Solomon over the 10 tribes of Israel (1 Kings 11:31-32), and who made not one, but *two* golden calves for the Israelites to worship so they wouldn't have to go to Jerusalem in Judah (1 Kings 12:28-31).

After Ahab's death, King Mesha of Moab, tried to throw off the yoke that Ahab had placed upon him and his people. To counter this, Jehoram got together with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, to fight against King Mesha. Jehoshaphat was the type of king who wanted to know what God actually thought, so Elisha was called. It is interesting to note that Elisha only came because of Jehoshaphat, not Jehoram. Jehoshaphat was a decent king, one of the few of the Southern Kingdom, while there was not one good king of the Northern Kingdom.

I am tempted to ask why God could find not one king in the Northern Kingdom who was devoted to God's purposes? But then how many righteous people did God actually find in Sodom/Gomorrah?

Was there not even *one* person who could've been a good king over Israel? Apparently not, which tells us exactly how bad people were during that time for Israel and the world. Is it that much different today? Not really. Honesty, integrity and lawfulness appear to be the exception to the rule today as corruption and lawlessness seem to be the growing norm. Lies have replaced truth today *as it was in the days of Lot and Noah*. Let's remember that this statement reminds us we were warned, first by Jesus, then by Paul and others in the New Testament.

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV)*

*...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:3-7 NKJV)*

Ever since Adam and Eve fell, this world has been on a collision course with God's judgment. In our day, we just happen to be much closer to it than any previous generation.

The evil of so many kings of Israel/Judah tends to shock us because this was the nation that God *created, revealed* Himself to, and *gave* His Law to so that they would be a light to the world. We wonder how after experiencing so many blessings and miracles Israel came to a point of rejecting God? It is the same reason people do so today; it is due to our sin and our unwillingness to live in fear of the Lord that would cause us to live godly lives, which is seen in obedience to Him. This puts us at odds with God. As Christians, if we are not careful to nurture our relationship with God, we *will* fail.

During Old Testament days Israel, prophets spoke and acted *on behalf of* God, representing Him and His concerns to the people. Too often, those prophets were badly treated and even murdered for daring to relay God's Word. Few want to hear truth today either.

The people who are speaking God's truth today are often maligned and badly treated. Yet, there are false *prophets* and *apostles* today, along with average preachers who are busy aligning themselves with the world. Because of it, they are accepted or at least not bothered because they pose no threat to Satan's kingdom and make no demands of fallen people. In short, they present no saving truth to anyone.

Because of all of this, the apostle Peter reminds us of some very important truths:

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:10-12 NKJV)*

Our manner of life is extremely important, isn't it? God is watching. Do we fear Him enough to want to obey His commands from the heart or are we just going through the motions for looks? Solomon sums up exactly how important this is for us on a daily basis.

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13 KJV)*

That's it in a nutshell. Everything stems from the above two truths. What is your response?