

Introduction: While we rejoice in the Spirit of God's anointing *Elisha* in 1 Kings 19:19-21, (because we rejoice in the progress of the Gospel even in the Old Testament), we *must also* turn our attention to God's anointing worldly kings and rulers to carry out His historical judgments – even against His own people! In 1 Kings 19:15-16, this means looking at the Syrian usurper and army general Hazael, and the forceful enforcer of justice against the house of Ahab – Jehu. We see God raising up these tools of judgement in 2 Kings 8:7-15 and 2 Kings 9:1-13, (respectively). Let us turn to the study of these men now, asking God to help us to truly and reverently fear Him and His judgments, so that the promise of Psalm 25:14 might be true in our lives:

“The friendship of the LORD is for those who **fear** him,  
and He makes known to them his covenant.”

**Monday: read 1 Kings 19:15-17; 1 Kings 20:1-10** The first person the LORD instructs Elijah to anoint (as the prophet returns to Israel and resumes his duties in God's name and by His authority) is Hazael, a soldier of the Syrian army which attacks Israel repeatedly in 1 and 2 Kings. But before we can understand Hazael, we must understand his master, the king of Syria, since that kingdom and ruler play such an important role in the history of Israel. We turn now to the lion of Syria, Ben-Hadad, mentioned in 1 Kings 20:1.

The ferocity of the Syrians is seen as the Syrian king Ben-Hadad bears his teeth against Ahab in 1 Kings 20:1-10, demanding from the Israelite king not only complete ownership of all the Israelite palace contained – but even ownership of Ahab's family and wives. When Ahab protests that he can give Ben-had no more than the allegiance and fealty a normal royal alliance would demand (and which Ahab was glad to give) the Syrian king promises to destroy Ahab and Israel and the entire capital of Samaria (1 Kings 20:10). The Syrian king's words sound much like Jezebel's when she threatened Elijah in 1 Kings 19:2: “May the gods do so to me ...”

Meditate and Pray: The roaring lion who oppresses God's people always sounds the same. Ben-Hadad threatens and destroys all that he can throughout his bloody history. No wonder, eventually, God gives this violent king over to total destruction in 1 Kings 20:42. Sing with thankfulness of the justice of God, that it eventually finds wicked kings like Ben-Hadad. Though Ahab fails to destroy this wicked foe of God's people, he will nevertheless die a violent and well-deserved death at the hands of none other than Hazael, as we will see tomorrow. For today, let's sing this Psalm of such divine judgments against the wicked (# 643):

1 Judge me, God of my salvation,  
plead my cause, for thee I trust:  
hear my earnest supplication,  
save me from my foes unjust.  
O my soul, why art thou grieving?  
What disquiets and dismays?  
Hope in God; his help receiving,  
I shall yet my Savior praise.

2 For my strength, my God, thou art:  
why am I cast off by thee  
in the sorrow of my heart,  
while the foe oppresses me?  
Light and truth, my way attending,  
send thou forth to be my guide,  
till, thy holy mount ascending,  
I within thy house abide.

3 At thy sacred altar bending,  
 God, my God, my boundless joy,  
 harp and voice, in worship blending,  
 for thy praise will I employ.  
 O my soul, why art thou grieving?  
 What disquiets and dismays?  
 Hope in God; his help receiving,  
 I shall yet my Savior praise.

**Tues/Weds/Thurs: read 1 Kings 20:11-43, 19:13-17; 2 Kings 8:14-15 and 2 Kings 9:1-37.** The rest of 1 Kings 20, describing the profound failure of Ahab to destroy the enemy of God named king Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, is really required reading if we want to understand the anointing of Hazael in 1 Kings 19:15. God raises up Hazael to be king over Syria to complete the destruction of Ben-Hadad, since Ahab failed to accomplish it. Yes, Hazael will also be used to sorely chastise the nation of Israel herself, since she rejected God's prophet Elijah, but though "judgment must always begin with the house of God," (1 Peter 4:17), it rests forever on the heads of the godless like Ben-Hadad. As God clearly says of this wicked king of Syria: "I have determined he should die." (1 Kings 20:42)

Meditate and Pray: Let us rest assured today that God's judgments are not merely to be tolerated and submitted to but are to be exalted by us as precisely correct and exactly what was needed. Ben-Hadad II, Israel's enemy in 1 Kings 20 and the son of another violent king Ben-Hadad of 1 Kings 15:18-20, dies at the hand of Hazael his own and closest servant in 2 Kings 8:15.

But now, what about the wicked ruler of Israel, Ahab, who "sold himself to do evil" as 1 Kings 21:25 says, and who spared the life of the godless foe Ben-Hadad in 1 Kings 20:42? Was God's justice also able to find *him* in his iniquity and sin? This brings us to the tool of vengeance named Jehu, whom the LORD promises to raise up to wield God's sword of vengeance against the family of Ahab in 1 Kings 19:17.

Elisha, acting on God's promise to Elijah, sends a servant with anointing oil to anoint Jehu to become king instead of his master, Jehoram, the son of Ahab. We read of this in 2 Kings 9:1-13. Thus the judgment against Ahab's house begins to be fulfilled, as God requires the blood which he and his wife Jezebel shed to be paid for by the death of all Ahab's family (2 Kings 9:8-10). Jehu then obeys God's call and proceeds to slaughter all that belonged to Ahab in 2 Kings 9:14-37, including the evil Jezebel. Though such bloody judgments are so hard to read about, let us humbly sing God's praises as we give thanks that He is implacably opposed to all wickedness and yet so mercifully able to save those who call upon Him. Sing # 545 in our hymnal:

1 When this passing world is done,  
 when has sunk yon glaring sun,  
 when we stand with Christ in glory,  
 looking o'er life's finished story,  
 then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
 not till then, how much I owe.

2 When I hear the wicked call  
 on the rocks and hills to fall,  
 when I see them start and shrink  
 on the fiery deluge brink,  
 then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
 not till then, how much I owe.

3 When I stand before the throne,  
 dressed in beauty not my own,  
 when I see thee as thou art,  
 love thee with unsinning heart,

then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
 not till then, how much I owe.

4 When the praise of heav'n I hear,  
loud as thunders to the ear,

loud as many waters' noise,  
sweet as harp's melodious voice,  
then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
not till then, how much I owe.

5 Chosen not for good in me,  
wakened up from wrath to flee,  
hidden in the Savior's side,  
by the Spirit sanctified,  
teach me, Lord, on earth to show,  
by my love, how much I owe.

**Friday: read 1 Kings 19:15-21.** Before rejoicing in the anointing and service of Elisha, who we will see follow Elijah in 2 Kings, we must first see that these mighty anointings which God accomplished through his downcast and disappointed servant Elijah, began with the very simple “return of Elijah” into the path of obedience in 1 Kings 19:15. It was when Elijah returned from his self-imposed exile in the wilderness, and put on afresh the obedience to God’s call, that the LORD then poured out His Spirit *through Elijah* onto those God had chosen to serve *after Elijah was gone*. Elijah must repent of his sinful, bitter and skewed perspective that “he alone” had been faithful to God, when in reality God had “reserved for Himself seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal,” (1 Kings 19:18), including Elisha!

Meditate and Pray: Sometimes the call of God demands a radical and dramatic response, as for example, in Elisha’s case, where God’s call on that young farmer in 1 Kings 19:21 means that he burns all his bridges and connections to his past life in order to then leave with Elijah to serve the LORD. All his farming equipment and oxen are joyfully sacrificed. There will be no going back for Elisha. Henceforth, he will serve the LORD. But even when our call to walk with the LORD in obedience is a simple matter of “returning to our old ways of following Him, it is still a commitment worth singing about in hymn # 565:

1 All for Jesus! All for Jesus!  
All my being's ransomed pow'rs:  
all my thoughts and words and doings,  
all my days and all my hours.

2 Let my hands perform his bidding,  
let my feet run in his ways;  
let my eyes see Jesus only,  
let my lips speak forth his praise.

3 Worldlings prize their gems of beauty,  
cling to gilded toys of dust,  
boast of wealth and fame and pleasure;  
only Jesus will I trust.

4 Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,  
I've lost sight of all beside;  
so enchained my spirit's vision,  
looking at the Crucified.

5 O what wonder! how amazing!  
Jesus, glorious King of kings,  
deigns to call me his beloved,  
lets me rest beneath His wings.

**Sat/Sun: read 1 Kings 21:1-22:40 and Psalm 37:35-36.** We surely are anticipating with excitement following the call of God on Elisha as he succeeds Elijah in 2 Kings 2. But before moving forward to the exciting ministry of Elijah's disciple Elisha, we must see how God cuts off Ahab and Jezebel and thereby rounds out the story of 1 Kings.

God's judgments against the wicked are often depicted as their being dramatically cut off in their reprobate condition. Only after such a cutting off of these dead branches does God move forward with His tending of the tree full of the sap of His grace. For example, behold how God describes Esau and his kingdom in Genesis 36 in all their glory as dukes, princes and kings. Then the LORD cuts them off. No more mention of Esau is made in Genesis as God turns to cultivate and nourish the covenant branch of Jacob's family – all the way from Genesis 37 to Genesis 50! In just this way, God's chain saw of justice can be heard kicking into gear as the last two chapters of Ahab's life are put before us. This evil king is about to be cut off, along with his whole family (1 Kings 21:21).

Meditate and Pray: It is surely a sobering fact that, as Psalm 37:35-36 says, one moment the wicked and godless man can be flourishing like a green tree, and the next God cuts him off so thoroughly that no amount of searching can discover his existence anymore. As William Shakespeare wrote about God's power to cut the wicked man off at the height of his powers:

—Today he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hopes, tomorrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honors upon him:  
Third day comes a frost, a killing frost;  
And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,  
And then he falls, as I do.  
—*William Shakespeare, in Henry VIII.*