

Group Study Outline

2 Kings 13:1-14:29

An alternative to this overview of the whole section would be a smaller section (eg 13:1-9 or 14:23-29)

Theme Sentence

The Lord acts mercifully, keeping his word, towards his foolish, wayward people

Launching Question

Why is it important to read Bible history (eg like 2 Kings)? why do the historical events and characters matter to us, centuries later?

Questions

Divide into four, and give each group one of these lists of verses to read, asking: what happens?

what are we told about why it happens?

- Jehoahaz 13:1-9; 22-23
- Jehoash/Joash 13:10-19, 24-25; 14:7-16
- Amaziah 14:1-21
- Jeroboam II 14:23-29

The aim is to share in 'reading' a long section, and to get the basic story clear.
In summary, what are these kings like?

Now READ 13:3-7, 14-19, 22-25; 14:23-29

How does God save his people from complete obliteration?

Who is the 'saviour' (13:5)?

Why does God save? (- lots of answers, spread throughout the passage)

In 13:14-19, 24-25, what do we discover about the king, and about God? how is this typical of them both?

What are we being told about Elisha as he comes to the end of his life/ministry?

What picture emerges through these chapters of what God's people are like?

Thinking it through

If you know nothing about God except these stories, what is it that the writer would want us to learn about the Lord?

What motivates God to keep his covenant in the face of such wickedness?
In what ways do these stories show us that God is merciful?

What bits in 2 Kings 13:1-14:29 point us forward to Jesus?

Application

How would these stories encourage the first readers, exiled in Babylon?
... as an example, how might the story of 13:21 encourage them?

How should these stories encourage us, when we're not exiled in Babylon?!

What are we being told about God's people? how are we like them?

What are we being told about the Lord? is this to warn us or encourage us?

2 Kings 13:1-14:29



The bigger picture

The key to understanding 1 and 2 Kings is the two 'bookends'

- the promises made in 2 Samuel 7:4-17
- those promises fulfilled in Jesus, the King-for-ever.

As we read 2 Kings, we're both looking at each king wondering if he might be the fulfilment of the promises God has made ... and yet at the same time knowing that none of these kings could possibly be that One.

We're now approaching the end of the 'Israel' half of the divided kingdom (in 2 Kings 17), at which point the promises will be carried on in the 'Judah' half. The stories therefore all have a sense of the impending and inevitable collapse.

But yet ... We see that, even at this eleventh hour, God is still acting in compassion, in line with his covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to provide a saviour. Salvation is clearly what his people need, otherwise they are lost. But every time he saves, it is all to point us forward to Jesus the Saviour-King.

[NS]

Theme Sentence

The Lord acts mercifully, keeping his word, towards his foolish, wayward people

Application

Our 'Biblical theology' approach to 2 Kings means that, when it comes to application, we're not really looking to the kings or prophets for examples to follow. There may be times when they do the right or wrong thing, but this is not being told to us so that we copy them, or not. As in every bit of the Bible, we want to ask: what is God doing? why is he doing it? how do we respond?

- The Lord is merciful. He saves his people again and again: that's the Lord for you, who wants all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9)!
- The Lord keeps his word. We keep seeing the importance of God's word, which commits him to action: how glad we are that he is utterly faithful.
- God's people are wallies! Surprise, surprise ... no-one comes out of these chapters looking squeaky clean.

The impact of these three applications comes when they are put together: the Lord acts mercifully, keeping his word, towards foolish, wayward people! He listens to the prayer of a calf-worshipper (3) and acts to save them, though his people are so ungrateful (13:5) etc etc. Why doesn't the Lord simply wash his hands of us ... it is absolutely extraordinary!

Overview of 2 Kings 13-14

These two chapters are confusing because the story keeps switching backwards and forwards, from North (Israel) to South (Judah). So first **the history**:

Israel King	reigned for	Prophet	Judah King	reigned for
		<i>Elisha</i>	Joash	40 yrs
Jehoahaz	17 yrs			
Jehoash/Joash	16 yrs		Amaziah	29 yrs
Jeroboam II	41 yrs	<i>Jonah</i>	Azariah/Uzziah	52 yrs

Secondly, **the structure** of these chapters ... and again it's confusing!

Israel King	formula	key point	Judah King	formula
Jehoahaz	13:1-2 13:8-9	13:3-7 13:22-23		
Jehoash/Joash	13:10-11, 13:12-13 14:15-16	13:14-19 13:24-25		
		14:8-14	Amaziah	14:1-3 [-7] 14:17-18
Jeroboam II	14:23-24, 14:28-29	14:25-27		

Main themes in 2 Kings 13-14

Dividing the story up like this helps us to see that between the standard formulaic summaries of each king's reign, there are significant moments that define his/Israel's folly, and the Lord's mercy. Remember that we are only a few chapters away from 17:23 when the Lord will remove Israel from his sight.

The Lord is merciful

- The Lord provides a Saviour for oppressed Israel (13:5; 14:26 cf Exod 3:9).
- That Saviour is Jehoash/Joash (whose victory in 25 is only less than the total 'making an end of' Syria because of his unenthusiastic response in 17-19).
- That Saviour is also Jeroboam II (who restores the borders in 14:25 almost to where they were in Solomon's reign, at the high point of the kingdom).

The Lord keeps his word

10:30 is the key text. These kings in Israel are the last part of a four-generation dynasty that came about because of God's promise to their father Jehu (who did the right thing to Ahab). So here too we see that God acts because of ...

- his covenant (23 cf Exod1:23-25).
- his promise through Elisha (17-19, 25).
- his word through Jonah (14:25, 27) (... and yes, this is that same Jonah!).

God's people are wallies!

- all three Israel kings 'do evil' (13:2, 11; 14:24), even if some actions are better than others (eg 13:4; 14:8f; 14:25).
- the Judah king who 'did right' (14:3) is nevertheless the silliest of all (14:8)!

Commentary

- 13:2 Jeroboam was Israel's first king (after the kingdom divided) whose *sins* (cf 1 Kgs 12:25-33) set the benchmark by which every other king is assessed.
- 3 The significance of Hazael, king of Syria, comes from the Lord's prophecy to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:15-18. His 'sword' is how the Lord is punishing here.
- 14 Joash's words echo Elisha's words when Elijah was 'taken' (2 Kgs 2:12): the idea is that when the prophet dies, Israel will be left undefended.
- 19 The promise of 17 is complete annihilation of Syria, but the king's response means that that comprehensive promise is now qualified. Was the king presumptuous, or disbelieving, or simply half-hearted ...?
- 20-21 is an extraordinary story (only two others are raised from the dead in all the OT [1 Kgs 17:17-24; 2 Kgs 4:32-37]). The ending of Elijah's time on earth was a moment not of death but of life (2 Kgs 2:11), and so is Elisha's. These events point to Matt 27:51b-53 where the bodies of dead believers were raised at Jesus' death, and came out of their graves at his resurrection.
- 14:4 The *high places* are 'local' shrines ... sometimes used for idol worship, sometimes for worship of the Lord: either way, they are wrong – it's either the wrong god, or the right God but in the wrong place/way!
- 5-6 Don't misread the *But* ... at the start of 6. This is a good thing Amaziah did – executing justice in line with, and rightly restrained by, the OT Law.
- 8 Lest there is any doubt about Amaziah's message, exactly the same phrase is used in v11 when they actually battle: he's asking for a fight! Jehoash's response suggests that Amaziah's victory against the Edomites (7) has gone to his head ... 'you think you can take on the world, but you're only a little weed, and I'm about to flatten you!'
- 14 This is almost passed over, but don't miss what is going on here. In the first place, Amaziah's arrogance cost Judah not just money and people, but some of what it needed to worship the Lord. Secondly, Jehoash does a terrible thing: he desecrates the temple, which stood for the glorious presence of God with his people, and good times of blessing (cf 1 Kgs 8-9).
- 23-29 Jeroboam II is a powerful player. Israel was within a whisker of being obliterated (in 13:1-7), and now is restored to former glory.

Where is Jesus in 2 Kings?

After the resurrection, Jesus showed his disciples where he is in the OT (cf Luke 24:17, 45f). We too 'search the Scriptures' knowing that they 'bear witness' to him (Jn 5:39), that he 'fulfils' the patterns of God's working (eg Matt 2:5-6, 15, 18, 23), and that every promise of God is confirmed in him (2 Cor 1:20).

These chapters help us to read the OT that way. God provides a Saviour for his people; we now know that his name is Jesus (Matt 1:21) who saves for all time rather than only providing temporary relief (Heb 9:25-26) and who provides complete victory rather than being limited to just 'three times' (Col 2:14-15). Yes indeed, God has kept his covenant promises (2 Kgs 13:23) ... to us!