

2 Kings Chapter 13

Verse 1-6: "Jehoahaz" reigned from 814 to 798 B.C. and perpetuated idol worship in Israel. Despite his unfaithfulness, "the Lord harkened unto him" because God had compassion on Israel and intended to fulfill His promise to Jehu (10:30). The "groove", or Asherah, is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. Probably a Canaanite goddess or a cultic worship object, it was associated with Baalism.

2 Kings 13:1 "In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] seventeen years."

"Twenty third year": 814 B.C. Joash of Judah began his reign in 835 B.C. (see note on 12:1), and Jehu of Israel died in 814 B.C. (see note on 10:36). Thus the 23rd year of Joash of Judah was calculated according to the non-accession-year system (see notes on 12:6; 13:10).

"Seventeen years": 814-798 B.C., i.e., part of 17 calendar years, with the actual reign counted as 16 years.

In all of these lessons, we are jumping back and forth from Israel to Judah, and then back to Israel. The ten tribes of Israel and the two tribes that make up Judah are very closely related. In both, we see that the LORD blesses them when they are faithful to Him. He severely punishes them, when they are unfaithful to Him. Judah had a few kings that tried to please God. In the tribes of Israel, there were no kings that truly lived for God. Again, we see the king of Judah spoken of in relationship with Israel. The 23rd year of the reign of Joash would have made the king of Judah 30 at the time. Jehoahaz would be king of Israel 17 years following the reign of his father, Jehu.

Verses 2-7: The record of the reign of Jehoahaz, the king of Israel, has literary and verbal similarities to the book of Judges:

1. Jehoahaz did evil in the sight of the Lord (verse 2; judges 2:11-13; 3:7");
2. The anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and He delivered them over to their enemies (verse 3; compare Judges 2:14-15; 3:8);
3. Jehoahaz cried out to the Lord who saw their oppression (verse 4 Judges 2:18; 3:9);
4. The Lord raised up a deliverer for Israel who rescued them out of the hand of their enemies (verse 5; Judges 2:16, 18; 3:9);
5. Israel continued in her evil ways with the result of further oppression (verses 6-7; Judges 2:19; 3:12-14).

2 Kings 13:2 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom."

“Jeroboam”: For his sins (see notes on 1 Kings 12:25-32). This description of Jeroboam as one who “made Israel sin” occurs (in 13:6, 11; 1 Kings 14:16; 15:30; 16:31; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29, 31; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21-22).

The sins mentioned here, are probably speaking of the two golden calves. One of them was in Dan and the other in Bethel. They were used in the worship of Jehovah in some unusual way, but it was displeasing to the LORD. It appears their worship was mingled in with Pagan worship. I believe this to be the sin, because that was the sin of Jeroboam.

2 Kings 13:3 "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all [their] days."

For “Hazael” and the Aramean problem (see the notes on 10:32 and 12:17-18; also see the notes on 8:8-15).

“Ben-hadad”: Either Ben-hadad II or, more likely, III (see note on 1 Kings 15:18). His reign as king of Syria began ca. 801 B.C. The length of his rule is unknown.

The LORD wanted them to worship Him in all purity. The first time the calf worship is mentioned connected to the Israelites, was on their journey to the Promised Land. He was so angry with that type of worship then, that He killed thousands of the worshippers. This is still golden calves they are worshipping. He is still angry, and gives them over into the hands of the Syrians. The Ben-hadad mentioned here, is actually the first one's grandson. It appears from this, that during the reign of Hazael and the reign of Ben-hadad the second, the Israelites warred with them; and the LORD helped Syria, instead of Israel. Many times, the Lord allows wars to punish His people for their sins.

Verses 4-6: Jehoahaz's repentance was apparently genuine but not total. Nevertheless, God sent a “savior” (or deliverer), probably Adad Nirari III of Assyria, who launched a series of campaigns against southern “Syria” that ultimately brought about the capture of Damascus in 802 B.C. This significantly reduced the Aramean pressure. Hazael himself died about this time, the throne being taken by his son Ben-hadad III (802 - ? B.C.), who was not at all his father's equal (compare verses 22-25).

2 Kings 13:4 "And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them."

He did not apply in his distress to the calves he worshipped, but to the Lord; who had a regard to his prayer, not for his sake, or any righteousness of his, or even his repentance and humiliation, which were only external. But for the sake of Israel, and because they were oppressed, who were his people, and He their God, though they had sadly departed from him.

"For he saw the oppression of Israel": Not only with his eye of omniscience, but with an eye of mercy and compassion.

"Because the king of Syria oppressed them": By his incursions upon them, and wars with them.

King Jehoahaz has done exactly what he should have done. He sought the LORD. This is saying, that he prayed to the LORD in earnest. It appears that Jehoahaz had no idea that the golden calves were offensive to the LORD. He prayed and repented, but not specifically about the calves. He did realize this oppression from Syria was a punishment, however. It appears also, that the LORD heard his prayer. God always listens to our earnest prayers. God did not entirely remove the oppression, but lightened it somewhat. He did not want them destroyed, just punished.

2 Kings 13:5 "(And the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.)"

"A savior": The savior was not specifically named. This savior was:

1. The Assyrian king Adad-Nirari III (ca. 810-783 B.C.), whose attack on the Syrians or Arameans, enabled the Israelites to break Syria's control over Israelite territory (see verse 25, 14:25); or
2. Elisha, who as the leader of Israel's military successes (see verse 14, compare 6:13; 16-23), commissioned Joash to defeat the Syrians (verses 15-19); or Jeroboam II (ca. 793-753 B.C.), who was able to extend Israel's boundaries back into Syrian territory (14:25-27).

It is not clear at this point, who this savior is. The danger of them all being killed was removed, and they were relatively calm for a while. They were not in open warfare in danger of their very lives, and they went back to their homes.

2 Kings 13:6 "Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, [but] walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)"

"Sins ... of Jeroboam" (see note on verse 2).

"Grove": This idol representing Asherah, a Canaanite goddess and a consort of Baal, had been set up by Ahab (1 Kings 16:33) and had escaped destruction by Jehu when he purged Baal worship from Samaria (10:27-28). Along with the other idolatrous religion of Jeroboam II, there were still remnants of Baal worship in the northern kingdom.

This is just saying, that Israel went right on with their calf worship and their worship in the groves. Perhaps, they had done this so long, they had ceased to realize it was sin.

2 Kings 13:7 "Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing."

“Syria was able to dominate Israel militarily because the Lord had left Jehoahaz only a small army with very few chariots.

“Dust by threshing”: The army of Israel was so inconsequential, particularly when compared to the armies of Syria and Assyria, that it was likened to the dust left over after grain had been winnowed at a threshing floor.

We can see from this verse that they had been reduced to very small numbers, before Jehoahaz cried out to God. This army, that had been into the hundreds of thousands, had been reduced to ten thousand. The reduction of the horsemen had been to fifty, and they had only ten chariots. This is not a very large army at all. We can see that Syria could have annihilated them, if the LORD had not intervened.

2 Kings 13:8 "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"

Which he exerted against the Syrians, being a man of courage, though not successful, because the Lord was not with him, but against him.

"Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" Where their acts, and the events of their reigns, were recorded.

It appears, the entire reign of Jehoahaz was filled with the trouble with Syria. Again, the record book that was kept had the rest of his activity written in it.

2 Kings 13:9 "And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead."

Died, as they did.

"And they buried him in Samaria": Where Omri, and all the kings of Israel, that descended from him, were buried.

"And Joash his son reigned in his stead": Of whom a short account is given in the following verses.

This is not the same Joash that reigned in Judah. Both of them were called Joash part of the time, and Jehoash the rest of the time. Samaria was the capital of Israel, and would have been the logical place to bury this king.

2 Kings 13:10 "In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, [and reigned] sixteen years."

“Thirty and seventh year”: Ca 798 B.C. Joash of Judah began his reign in 835 B.C. (see note on 12:1). There is a change here to the accession-year system of dating for the reign of Joash of

Judah (see note on 13:1). This explains how Jehoahaz of Israel could reign 16 years with only a 15 year advance on Joash of Judah's reign of a king's years (verse 1).

"Joash": This king of Israel had the same name as his contemporary, the king of Judah (see note on 11:21).

"Sixteen years": 798-782 B.C.

Joash in Israel becomes king just three years before the Joash in Judah dies. The similar names are possibly, because of their close association. These were also probably, popular names of their day.

2 Kings 13:11 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: [but] he walked therein."

As his father did, and his character is described in the same words (see 2 Kings 13:2).

This is the same situation as with his father. They still have the golden calves, that Jeroboam had been guilty of setting up in Bethel and Dan. He perhaps was a good king in the same sense his father was, but in the sight of God, he was evil.

2 Kings 13:12 "And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"

"Fought against Amaziah" (see notes on 14:8-14).

2 Kings 13:13 "And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel."

Or died.

"And Jeroboam sat upon his throne": Who was his son. It is not said that he began to sit on it, or to reign, nor to reign in his father's stead. Hence it is concluded by Kimchi and others, that his father set him on his throne in his lifetime. And the Jewish chronology expressly asserts that he reigned with him one year.

"And Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel" (see 2 Kings 13:9). The history of his life and actions does not cease here, but, after an account of the sickness and death of Elisha, it is reassumed, which was necessary to interpose to lead on to it.

This is an unusual place for this statement to be, since there is more in this chapter about Joash. Again, the rest of the story of the exploits of Joash is contained in the records they kept of the kings of Israel. It is difficult to believe that Joash would have named his son Jeroboam. You can tell from that, they had no idea he had done something wrong by setting up the calf worship.

2 Kings 13:14 "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

“Elisha”: The last previous reference to Elisha the prophet was (in 9:1), when Jehu was anointed king of Israel. Since Jehu and Jehoahaz reigned from 841-798 B.C. (see notes on 10:36; 13:1), nothing was recorded for over 40 years of Elisha’s life. Elisha began ministering with Elijah during the kingship of Ahab ca. 874-853 B.C. (1 Kings 19:19-21), and so must have been over 70 years of age when these final events of his life took place. Elisha still sought to do the Lord’s work every day, in spite of his terminal “sickness”.

“My Father”: Jehoash humbly voiced his great respect for Elisha and his dependence upon his counsel (see note on 2:12).

“The chariot of Israel and the horsemen”: Jehoash acknowledged through this metaphor that the Lord, through Elisha, was the real strength and power of Israel against all her adversaries (see note on 2:11).

Elisha had been a prophet in Israel for a great many years by this time. He was probably about 80 years of age when he fell sick. We would assume that this illness is of old age. It would be terribly unusual for the king of the land to come, and weep over a prophet. We see that Joash had great respect for Elisha, even to the extent of calling him father. Joash had some very good qualities that are shown by his concern here. Joash felt like the death of Elisha was the signal that the strength of Israel was gone. He felt that God's blessings on Israel would leave the earth with the death of Elisha. He undoubtedly had great respect for Elisha as a prophet of God.

Verses 15-19: If he had been spiritually astute, Joash would have recognized that Elisha was offering him a blessing. That is why Elisha became angry with him, Joash’s less-than-enthusiastic participation in these symbolic acts demonstrated his lack of commitment to God’s ways.

2 Kings 13:15 "And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows."

The usual instruments of war in those days.

“And he took unto him bow and arrows”: Which though they might not be had in the house of the prophet, he could have some from his guards that attended him.

2 Kings 13:16 "And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand [upon it]: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands."

“Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands”: This symbolic act indicated that Jehoash would exert power against the Syrians that came from the Lord through His prophet.

This was a sign that the blessings in battle would be in the hands of Joash to deliver his people. Elisha's strength flowed into Joash's hands. Of course, Elisha's power and strength came from God. As a prophet, he represented the LORD on the earth.

2 Kings 13:17 "And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened [it]. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed [them]."

“Window eastward”: This window opened toward the east to the Transjordan region controlled by Syria (10: 32-33).

“The arrow of the LORD’s deliverance”: When Jehoash obeyed Elisha by shooting an arrow out the window, the prophet interpreted the meaning of the action. The shot symbolized the Lord’s deliverance for Israel through the defeat of the Syrian army by Jehoash (verse 5).

“Aphek” (see note on 1 Kings 20:26).

This prophesy, spoken on Joash, said he would overcome Syria at Aphek. He would deliver his people from these Syrians. The Lord would be with him in this battle.

2 Kings 13:18 "And he said, Take the arrows. And he took [them]. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed."

The rest of them.

"And he said unto the king of Israel, smite upon the ground": The floor of the room in which the prophet lay.

"And he smote thrice, and stayed": Made a stop, ceased smiting. He might think this action trifling, and beneath him, only was willing to please the prophet, but did not do it with a good will, and therefore smote no more. Though this was an emblem of his smiting the Syrians, which he might not have understood.

It appears, that the striking of the arrows on the ground spoke of the battles against Syria. Joash did not realize that Elisha wanted him to strike the ground over and over, as in the fury of battle. He just hit the ground three times and quit.

2 Kings 13:19 "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed [it]: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria [but] thrice."

“But thrice”: Further, Elisha commanded Jehoash to shoot the remaining arrows into the ground (verse 18). Jehoash shot only 3 arrows into the ground instead of emptying the entire quiver. Because of his lack of faith, Jehoash would win only 3 victories over the Syrians instead of completely destroying them. The account of these victories is given in verse 25.

Despite his prowess as a fighter (verse 25; 14:8-15), Joash was a man of little faith.

Joash did not understand, that the striking of the ground symbolized striking the earthly people of Syria. He had no idea what this symbolized. He will indeed, come against Syria three times. Had he struck the ground over and over, he would have eventually destroyed Syria. Now he will beat them in three battles, but they will come back again and again.

Verses 20-21: God demonstration of power through “Elisha” continued even after he “died”. This final miracle associated with the prophet pointed to what God could and would do with the spiritually dead in Israel: restore them to life (Ezek. 37:1-14). God’s power does the same for those who are spiritually dead today when they turn to Him through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:1-10).

2 Kings 13:20 "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year."

“Coming in of the year”: The prophet, who was Israel’s defense (verse 14), was dead and it was the season for war campaigns to begin after the rains of winter.

The place of burial for Elisha would be a place of honor. The nicest place to be buried in those days, was a tomb carved out of a rock in a side of the mountain. This would be the type of place where they would bury him. Elijah, you remember, was not buried, but carried to heaven in a whirlwind. Moab attacks Israel regularly, and the time would be at the beginning of the year.

2 Kings 13:21 "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band [of men]; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet."

“He revived”: A dead man returned to life after touching Elisha’s bones. This miracle was a sign that God’s power continued to work in relationship to Elisha even after his death. What God had promised to Jehoash through Elisha when he was alive would surely come to pass after the prophet’s death (verses 19, 25), in the defeat of the enemy, the recovery of the cities that had been taken, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel (verse 22-25).

This miracle authenticated Elisha’s last prophecy (verse 19). As Elisha’s body had brought life to the dead, so would his prophecy attest God’s provision of new life for Israel under Joash and Jeroboam II.

It appears that some Israelites were attempting to bury a man when something startled them, and they accidentally put the man into the tomb where Elisha had been lain. Elisha seemed to still be carrying out miracles for the LORD, even after his own death. When the supposedly dead man touched the bones of Elisha, the man was revived and lived. The request of Elisha had been to have a double portion of what Elijah had. We know that Elisha saw him, when he was taken and the Lord did give the double portion to Elisha. One of my dearest preacher friends believes the

miracle in verse 21 happened to completely fulfill twice as many miracles done by Elisha as Elijah. Elisha would have been one short of double had this not happened.

Verses 22-25: In the midst of Israel's oppression, and despite the people's disobedience, God was faithful to "His covenant" (14:26-27; Exodus 34:6), and returned the "cities of Israel" to the nation (10:32-33).

2 Kings 13:22 "But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz."

That he reigned alone, at least, before he took his son Joash to reign with him.

(See note on 8:12).

Syria was a heathen nation, and the LORD used them to chastise the Israelites.

2 Kings 13:23 "And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet."

"His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob": During the wicked reign of Jehoahaz (verses 2-7), the Lord was very patient and did not bring the ultimate military defeat that would lead to exile for Israel. This was because of His agreement with the patriarchs to give their descendants the land (Gen. 15:18-21; 26:2-5; 28:13-15). It was God's promise, not the Israelites' goodness that motivated God to be merciful and compassionate toward Israel.

This is the only reason that the LORD did not let Israel be totally destroyed. The covenant God had with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been a covenant of mercy. God wanted to bless them if they would love Him and keep His commandments. It was their unfaithfulness that caused their chastisements.

2 Kings 13:24 "So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead."

This was Ben-hadad the third. The first of this name was of the Damascene kings; but though the kingdom was now in another family, yet this name, being respectable with the Syrians, was retained in it.

Earlier in this lesson, we discovered that this is speaking of Ben-hadad the second.

2 Kings 13:25 "And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel."

Which were in the countries of Gilead and Bashan, and belonged to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (2 Kings 10:33).

"Three times did Joash beat him": In so many pitched battles, but where is not said, no doubt one of them was in Aphek, at least (2 Kings 13:17). And perhaps the other two on the other side Jordan. This agrees with the three times he smote the ground, significant thereof (2 Kings 13:18).

"And recovered the cities of Israel": Those before mentioned. Otherwise, if those had not been recovered, not ten tribes but only seven and a half would have been carried captive by the king of Assyria. Whereas Josephus says expressly, the ten tribes were carried captive.

Jehoash is the same as Joash. This is an exact fulfillment of what Elisha had told him, when he had him to strike the arrows on the ground. These three victories by Joash brought the cities back to Israel. We know the rest of the prophecy said, if he had continued he would have totally defeated Syria, but he did not continue. In the reign of Jeroboam the second, we will see this change back.

2 Kings Chapter 13 Questions

1. How long would Jehoahaz reign?
2. Who was king in Judah, when he began to reign?
3. What kind of a king was he in the sight of the LORD?
4. What were the sins of Jeroboam?
5. Their worship of God was mixed with _____ worship.
6. Whose hands did the LORD deliver them into?
7. Which Ben-hadad is mentioned in verse 3?
8. Who sought the LORD for help?
9. The king of Israel repented somewhat, but what sin did they remain with?
10. What was the size of the army of Jehoahaz?
11. Who reigned in the place of Jehoahaz?
12. What was the capital of Israel?
13. What was another name for Joash?
14. When did the Joash in Israel begin to reign?
15. What kind of king was he?

16. About how old was Elisha, when he became sick?
17. Who came to see him?
18. What strange statement did Joash make to Elisha?
19. Why was he so bereaved about Elisha?
20. What did Elisha do, that showed his strength in battle would be in the hands of Joash?
21. What did Elisha tell him to do, that would show the Lord's deliverance.
22. How many times did Joash smite the ground with the arrows?
23. Why was Elisha wroth with Joash?
24. Where would they bury Elisha?
25. What happened to the dead man, who touched Elisha's bones?
26. Why was the LORD gracious unto Israel?
27. How was Elisha's prophecy to Joash fulfilled?