

The ministry of Elisha has come to an end with his death from a sickness from which he never recovered. And yet, as we saw last time even in death God used Elijah as a dead man was thrown into his tomb and when the dead man touched the bones of Elijah he stood up alive.

By the way, was there something special about the bones of Elijah that enabled this dead man to come to life?

No. Bones are bones, but God in His grace and mercy has brought life through the servant of Elisha, even in death.

This is why we need to be careful not to think that the servants of God, no matter how holy or productive, are not mere men and are still prone to sin.

So, why does a Noah, or an Enoch or an Elijah seem to enjoy special privileges at the hand of God?

Because it is God's desire and will to work through whomever He wishes for the purposes He has chosen to bring honor and glory to His name. That can be through believers or unbelievers.

Ephesians 1:9-12 ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

When God says that He sums up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth, what does that exclude?

When it says that He works all things after the counsel of His will, what does that exclude?

Even in the case of unbelievers it is God who raises people up to do according to all that He purposes.

Romans 9:17-21 ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO

DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

If God is the potter and there is no unrighteousness in Him, then if He chooses to make one pot for one use and another pot for another use are we to assume that He is not fair because all pots are not the same or serve the same function?

Proverbs 21:1 ^{NAU} The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

And yet the writer of Proverbs makes it clear that even if God chooses to turn the heart of a king for His own good purpose it does not negate the fact that the king's heart is still responsible for the condition in which it works.

Proverbs 21:2-4 ² Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts. ³ To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice. ⁴ Haughty eyes and a proud heart, The lamp of the wicked, is sin.

So, how can God blame someone for the choices he makes in life that don't include God, ultimately to suffer God's wrath?

Romans 9:15-20 ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

And yet, we must never think that God has simply created sentient beings who are mere robots and do only those things that are preprogrammed in them. People are still responsible to God for the choices they make.

And the choices we make as believers in Christ for the Lord are our choices, but even those choices are governed by the Spirit who resides in us and enables us to please God in serving Him.

Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

But we can walk in them because He has chosen us before the foundations of the world to walk with Him.

Romans 8:28-30 ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So, back to our text.

The kings of both Israel and Judah will continue to war with each other and God will continue to replace one king with another and will judge those kings because of the choices they make for the people of God.

King after king will be replaced, and unfortunately the kings of Israel follow in the steps of their fathers who did evil in the sight of the Lord. And yet in His long-suffering God kept His hand from destroying Israel for the sake of the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But even God's patience comes to an end as we see in 2Kings 15 where the kings of Assyria come against Israel.

2 Kings 15:19-20 ¹⁹ Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver so that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his rule. ²⁰ Then Menahem exacted the money from Israel, even from all the

mighty men of wealth, from each man fifty shekels of silver to pay the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria returned and did not remain there in the land.

2 Kings 15:27-29 ²⁷ In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* twenty years. ²⁸ He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. ²⁹ In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

So, what appears to be happening to Israel at the hands of Assyria?

Assyria is a controlling factor in the lives of the Israelites as they pay tribute to Assyria, which is a kind way of saying that the Assyrians are demanding protection money, not unlike the mob did with businesses that were forced to pay them to stay in business.

What is interesting though are the reasons the Assyrians come against Israel. It appears to be in their political interest to keep Israel weak so that they don't form armies or alliances to invade Assyria. And what started as mere tributes instigated by Pul the king of Assyria turned into invading part of Israel and inhabiting it at the hands of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria.

And so, the whole dynamics of Assyria controlling Israel seems to be the plan of the kings of Assyria because it's in their national interest. But you know what the real reason is that Assyria takes their position against Israel?

1 Chronicles 5:23-26 ²³ Now the sons of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land; from Bashan to Baal-hermon and Senir and Mount Hermon they were numerous. ²⁴ These were the heads of their fathers' households, even Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah and Jahdiel, mighty men of valor, famous men, heads of their fathers' households. ²⁵ But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. ²⁶ So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara and to the river of Gozan, to this day.

What appears to be mere political decisions by the kings of Assyria are nothing more than God causing them to be used as agents of judgment against Israel because of their sins against their God. But the kings of Assyria aren't content to capture only parts of Israel as Shalmaneser king of Assyria would finally invade the whole land.

2 Kings 17:1-6 ^{NAU} In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* nine years. ² He did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³ Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. ⁴ But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. ⁵ Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, *on* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Hoshea would become the last king of the northern kingdom of Israel as Assyria would invade and take them into captivity around 720 B.C.

But even this invasion by Assyria by Shalmaneser was not simply the desire of this king to capture Israel. God's hand was directing this king for a purpose.

2 Kings 17:7-18 ⁷ Now *this* came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods ⁸ and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and *in the customs* of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. ⁹ The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. ¹² They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do

this thing." ¹³ Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets *and* every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." ¹⁴ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. ¹⁵ They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. ¹⁶ They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. ¹⁸ So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.

Whether it's the history of Israel or history in general all history is redemptive history because all of history belongs to the God who created men to exist for His purposes.

But with all of the kings, both of Israel and Judah, most of whom did evil in the sight of the Lord, there was a king of Judah who feared God and walked in all His ways.

2 Kings 18:1-8 ^{NAU} Now it came about ^ain the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that ^bHezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. ² He was ^atwenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. ³ ^aHe did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. ⁴ ^aHe removed the high places and broke down the *sacred* pillars and cut down the ¹Asherah. He also broke in pieces ^bthe bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called ²Nehushtan. ⁵ ^aHe trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; ^bso that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among those* who were before him. ⁶ For he ^aclung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. ⁷ ^aAnd the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And ^bhe rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. ⁸ ^aHe

¹defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from
^bwatchtower to fortified city.

It was during his reign that the king of Assyria continued to capture all of Israel, and then he went about capturing parts of Judah.

2 Kings 18:1-8 ^{NAU} Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. ² He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. ³ He did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. ⁴ He removed the high places and broke down the *sacred* pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. ⁵ He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among those* who were before him. ⁶ For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. ⁷ And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. ⁸ He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

This righteous man, king Hezekiah, bows to the might of Sennacherib king of Assyria. But the king of Assyria isn't content to take tribute from Judah. He wants the entire nation to bow to him. It was this time in history when Israel was relying on Egypt to protect them, but the Assyrians have contempt for Egypt because it has lost most of its power in the region.

And so, the king of Assyria sends a messenger by the name of Rabshakeh to Hezekiah to have him sign a treaty to promise not to bring Egypt into a war with Assyria.

2 Kings 18:21 ²¹ "Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, *even* on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

In this open air discussion Rabshakeh and the representatives of Hezekiah have the ear of all who sit on the walls and the representatives of Hezekiah want to carry this discussion on in

another language, namely Aramaic instead of Judean, so that those on the wall will not hear how they decide Judah's fate. But Rabshakeh says no and continues in Judean.

2 Kings 18:28-37 ²⁸ Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. ²⁹ "Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; ³⁰ nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." ³¹ 'Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, "Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, ³² until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die." But do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." ³³ 'Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? ³⁴ 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? ³⁵ 'Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'" ³⁶ But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." ³⁷ Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

As we come to the end of chapter 18 it would appear that the super power of the region, namely Assyria, holds all of the cards. No army of Israel and Egypt is able to defeat Assyria and Hezekiah knows it. But again, if history is only made up of the will of man Assyria is the winner.

But God not only holds history He directs it for His good pleasure and His good pleasure is not to allow the king of Assyria to have his way, especially in light of his blaspheming the one true God. And so I want to end by reading the entire 19th chapter because it puts all of history into perspective from the only perspective that has any weight and that is God's.

2 Kings 19:1-37 ^{NAU} And when King Hezekiah heard *it*, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. ² Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household

with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. ³ They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth and there is no strength to *deliver*.' ⁴ 'Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'" ⁵ So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶ Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. ⁷ 'Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"⁸ Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. ⁹ When he heard *them* say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has come out to fight against you," he sent messengers again to Hezekiah saying, ¹⁰ "Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, 'Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" ¹¹ 'Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? ¹² 'Did the gods of those nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them, *even* Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who *were* in Telassar? ¹³ 'Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and *of* Hena and Ivvah?"¹⁴ Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ¹⁶ "Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. ¹⁷ "Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands ¹⁸ and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. ¹⁹ "Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God." ²⁰ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard *you*.' ²¹ "This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: 'She has despised you and mocked you,

The virgin daughter of Zion; She has shaken *her* head behind you, The daughter of Jerusalem! ²² 'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised *your* voice, And haughtily lifted up your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! ²³ 'Through your messengers you have reproached the Lord, And you have said, "With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, To the remotest parts of Lebanon; And I cut down its tall cedars *and* its choice cypresses. And I entered its farthest lodging place, its thickest forest. ²⁴ "I dug *wells* and drank foreign waters, And with the sole of my feet I dried up All the rivers of Egypt." ²⁵ 'Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps. ²⁶ 'Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength, They were dismayed and put to shame; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up. ²⁷ 'But I know your sitting down, And your going out and your coming in, And your raging against Me. ²⁸ 'Because of your raging against Me, And because your arrogance has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came. ²⁹ 'Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. ³⁰ 'The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. ³¹ 'For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD will perform this. ³² 'Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, "He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield or throw up a siege ramp against it. ³³ "By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall not come to this city," declares the LORD. ³⁴ 'For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" ³⁵ Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead. ³⁶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned *home*, and lived at Nineveh. ³⁷ It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.