

# Old Testament History

## The Divided Kingdom – Lesson 6

### Background:

#### Introduction:

Idolatry was an ongoing problem among the kings of Judah as it has been among the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. After Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah died (873-849 BC), his oldest son Jehoram (also Joram) ascended to the throne (849-842 BC), taking for his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

Therefore, it came as no surprise to many that he would soon be lured into the pagan idolatry of his wife's infamous parents, nor did it surprise the faithful that Jehoram's involvement in Baal worship would bring the displeasure of God down upon him and upon his kingdom, Judah. Jehoram and the people of Judah would pay a heavy price. The Edomites revolted to free themselves of Judah's control, and soon the Philistines, Arabians and the Cushites invaded the land, carrying away a great amount of spoils from the wars, including Jehoram's wives and all his children, except Ahaziah.

Jehoram's death was both painful and dreadful. Because of his wickedness he was refused a place in the sepulcher of the kings (2 Kings 8:16-24; 2 Chronicles 21:1).

Jehoram was followed to the throne by his son, Ahaziah, also called Jehoahaz (842-842 BC). Unfortunately, Judah's sixth king was heavily influenced by the idolatry of his mother Athaliah, and his brief reign in Judah was truly disastrous. Ahaziah's uncle, Jehoram, was king of Israel at that time and was embroiled in war against the king of Damascus over the disputed city of Ramoth-gilead, the place where his father Ahab had lost his life twelve years earlier. Ahaziah decided to help his uncle Jehoram in the campaign. However, Ahaziah's brief reign came to an end when he was wounded in battle as he attempted to escape, and died as soon as he reached Megiddo. Ahaziah reigned only one year.

A prominent historical figure that appears in this narrative is Hazael (c. 843-798 BC), an officer of Benhadad II. Benhadad had been suffering from an acute illness, and upon hearing that Elisha was in Damascus, sent his trusted officer Hazael to inquire whether he would recover. When Elisha met Hazael, the prophet sent him back to the king with a puzzling prophecy: "Go, say to him, 'You shall surely recover,' but the Lord has shown me that he will certainly die: (2 Kings 10). While gazing upon Hazael, the prophet began to weep, explaining "I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their women with child you will rip up." When Hazael couldn't imagine anyone being so cruel to do such things, Elisha told him, "The Lord has shown me that you will be king over Aram (Damascus). Convinced that his rise to the throne was divinely sanctioned, Hazael delivered the good news to Benhadad that he would

recover, but proceeded the next day to ensure his future at the next king by murdering Benhadad II. Ironically, Hazael's ascent to the throne in Damascus as the next king of Syria has been sanctioned by the Lord, according to Elijah (1 Kings 19:15).

### Historical Notes:

Archeological discoveries have constantly proved the biblical record to be true and accurate. Because of the Bible's historical accuracy, time and time again it has been proven to be more than just the wirings of uninspired men. It could only be the product of an infallible, infinite, all-knowing God.



This is ivory statuette, approximately 7 inches tall, is said to be one of the few artifacts that represents Hazael, ancient King of Syria who fought against Israel. After seizing the throne, Hazael reigned for about 37 years (c. 842-805 BC). He went to war with Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Assyrian records verify the biblical account of the wars with Syria, and an inscription by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (c. 858-824 BC) mention Hazael by name (whom he called a "worthless man" for assassinating the king whom he calls Hadadezer).

*"I was victorious over Hadadezer [Benhadad II] of Damascus along with his allies which numbered twelve kings. His warriors, numbering 20,900, laid slain upon the ground, while his remaining army was forced to withdraw to the Orontes River. There they retreated in order to spare their lives. Afterwards Hadadezer died and Hazael, the son of a worthless man, seized the throne. He formed a large army and waged war against me. I engaged him in battle and claimed the victory. He retreated in order to save his life." (ANET 280)*

In another Assyrian document, Shalmaneser III records his ultimate defeat of the Syrian king Hazael and the destruction of the cities that stood in his way.

*"In the 18th year of my reign for the 16th time I crossed the Euphrates. Hazael of Damascus trusted to the strength of his armies and mustered his troops in full force. Senir (Mount Hermon), a mountain summit which is in front of Lebanon, he made his stronghold. I fought with him; his defeat I accomplished; 600 of his soldiers with weapons I laid low; 1,121 of his chariots, 470 of his horses, with his camp I took from him. To save his life, he retreated; I pursued him; in Damascus, his royal city, I shut him up. His plantations I cut down. As far as the mountains of the Hauran I marched. Cities without number I wrecked, razed, and burnt with fire. Their spoil beyond count I carried away. As far as the mountains of Baal-Rosh, which is a headland of the sea [at the mouth of the Nahr el-Kelb, Dog River], I marched; my royal likeness I there set up. At*

*that time I received the tribute of the Syrians and Sidonians and of Yahua [Jehu] the son of Khumri [Omri]"*

- Shalmaneser III (c. 842 BC)

This ivory statuette came from the palace of Hazael the ancient king of Damascus. It was discovered in the ruins of Arslan Tash in north Syria (ancient Hadatu) and is important in the study of Biblical archaeology. Several artifacts from the palace of Hazael are now in the Aleppo Museum in Syria.



Another important archeological discovery, *The Stele of Zakkur*, is a record of the reign and campaigns of the Syrian king, "BarHadad (Benhadad III), son of Hazael". The Stele of Zakkur (or Zakur), king of Hamath and Lu'ash, was discovered in 1903 at Tell Afis, 45 km southeast of Aleppo. Little remains of the figure that once stood atop the stele, but most of its Old Aramaic inscription has survived, with the exception of some 30 lines. Though the date of the stele is debated (dates range from 805 to 775 BC), it constitutes an important source of evidence for the Aramean (Syrian) kingdom, and permits a rare portrait into the frequent border skirmishes that preoccupied Aramaea in the early eight century BC. It was published in 1907, and reads, in part:

*"I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Luash... BarHadad, son of Hazael, king of Aram, united against me seventeen kings... all these kings laid siege to Hazrch... Baalshamayn said to me, "Do not be afraid!... I will save you from all [these kings who] have besieged you."*

## Outline:

### I. Elisha (2 Kings 8:1-15)

- A. Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 8:1-6)
- B. Elisha and Hazael (2 Kings 8:7-15)

### II. Jehoram in Judah (2 Kings 8:16-24; 2 Chronicles 21:1-20)

- A. Jehoshaphat leaves the throne of Judah to his son (2 Kings 8:16-19; 2 Chronicles 21:1-7)
- B. Revolt against Judah (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-20)
- C. The death of Jehoram (2 Kings 8:23-24; 2 Chronicles 21:19-20)

### III. Alliance between Ahaziah and Joram (2 Kings 8:25-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5-6)

- A. The alliance (2 Kings 8:25-28; 2 Chronicles 22:5)
- B. The battle (2 Kings 8:28-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5-6)

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblehub.com/> or <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Elisha (2 Kings 8:1-15)**

#### **A. Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 8:1-6)**

1. What was the duration of the famine Elisha prophesied? (1 Kings 8:1)
2. How long did this compare to the famine that occurred during the days of Elijah? (1 Kings 18:1; cf. Luke 4:25-26; James 5:17)
3. Where did the Shunammite woman go during the famine (2 Kings 8:2)
4. When the famine ended and she returned to Israel, what was her plea to the king? Why did the king restore her property? (2 Kings 8:3-6)

#### **B. Elisha and Hazael (2 Kings 8:7-15)**

1. Where did Elisha go, and who was sick? (2 Kings 8:7)
2. What message did Benhadad II send to him? Who brought the message? (2 Kings 8:8-9)

3. What was Elisha's reply? (2 Kings 8:10)
  
4. What evil did Elisha prophesy Hazael would do against Israel? (2 Kings 8:11-12)
  
5. What did the Lord reveal to Elisha concerning Hazael? (2 Kings 8:13)
  
6. Who had the Lord instructed to anoint Hazael as king of Syria? (1 Kings 19:15)
  
7. What treachery did Hazael commit against Benhadad II? (2 Kings 8:14-15)

**II. Jehoram in Judah (2 Kings 8:16-24; 2 Chronicles 21:1-20)**

**A. Jehoshaphat leaves the throne of Judah to his son (2 Kings 8:16-19; 2 Chronicles 21:1-8)**

1. What did Jehoshaphat give to his sons? (2 Chronicles 21:1-3)
  
2. To whom did he give the kingdom? Why? (2 Chronicles 21:1-3)

3. When Jehoram became king in Judah, he strengthened himself by committing what evil act? (2 Chronicles 21:4)
  
4. Describe Jehoram's sins. Who was his wife? How did he corrupt the worship of Jehovah? (2 Kings 8:16-18; 2 Chronicles 21:5-6, 11)
  
5. Why did the Lord not destroy Judah? (2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chronicles 21:7)

**B. Revolt against Judah (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-20)**

6. During Jehoram's reign revolt occurred in the dominion of Judah
  - a. Who revolted? (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8)
  
  - b. Who had conquered Edom? (2 Samuel 8:13-14; 2 Chronicles 18:12-13)
  
  - c. What was the status of Edom during the reign of Jehoshaphat? (1 Kings 22:47)
  
  - d. When Isaac gave his blessing to Esau, what did he tell him? (Genesis 27:38-40)
  
  - e. Who had conquered Libnah? (Joshua 10:29-20)

- f. To whom had the city been given? (Joshua 21:13)
  
- 7. What message did Jehoram receive from Elijah? (2 Chronicles 21:12-15) <sup>1</sup>
  
- 8. Who invaded Judah during the reign of Jehoram? What calamities did they inflict upon Jehoram? (2 Chronicles 21:16-17)

### **III. The alliance between Ahaziah and Joram (2 Kings 8:25-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5-6)**

#### **A. The alliance (2 Kings 8:25-28; 2 Chronicles 22:5)**

- 1. Who did Ahaziah and Joram joined forces against to go to war? At what place? (2 Kings 8:25-28; 2 Chronicles 22:5)

#### **B. The battle (2 Kings 8:28-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5-6)**

- 1. Who was wounded in the battle? To what city did he go to recover? Who came to visit him? (2 Kings 8:28-29; 2 Chronicles 22:5-6)

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<sup>1</sup> It is uncertain whether this message came to Jehoram after Elijah was taken to heaven, or if he was still alive when Jehoram reigned and his ascension (2 Kings 2) is out of chronological order. Regardless, it is noteworthy that Elijah, the prophet to Israel, was concerned about the idolatry in Judah also.

**Application:**

In your own words, explain the lessons we can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations?



# The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel and Surrounding Kingdoms

