

Who's Running This Kingdom?

1 Kings

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Kingdom, Kingdom, Who's Got the Kingdom?

Hook:

In a democracy, there is a smooth transition of power – which prevents rebellion and mass riots. In monarchies, that is not always the case. Who the next leader is may be determined by royal heritage/lineage, or by might as the most powerful person assumes the throne.

In Israel's still fragile monarchy, who the next leader will be is in question. Although God has determined that Solomon, David's son would be the one to inherit the throne, that has not been made clear by David to everyone – and what seems to be a power vacuum, chaos is looming.

"Here is an old, cold king who seems not to be long for this world." Davis, p.15

"His health and vitality were diminishing daily, and it was only a matter of time until his death. It was assumed that one of David's sons would become the next king, but no one knew for certain which son it would be. Privately, David had told Bathsheba that Solomon would reign in his place, but he had not publicly installed Solomon as his replacement. David's failure to step down and to act decisively in installing Solomon on the throne created a leadership vacuum that Adonijah, one of David's other sons, attempted to fill. Adonijah managed to convince some of Israel's key leaders to give him their support, and the celebration of his "victory" was already underway.

These were tense moments for the nation Israel, and even more so for Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and for those who remained loyal to David. If Adonijah was successful in his efforts to seize the throne, he would almost certainly kill every descendant of David who might be a rival for the throne. The first two chapters of 1 Kings are thus filled with suspense and intrigue, as Solomon finally prevails and secures his position as the king of Israel." - Diffenbaugh

"Old and tired, David spent his days trying to keep warm, huddled under a mound of blankets. While dreamed of days gone by, his son Adonijah schemed to set himself up as king, just as another son, Absalom, had tried to do. Adonijah's rebellion had both military and spiritual support – Joab, the former commander of David's army, and Abiathar the priest were among those shouting, "Long live King Adonijah!"

But God had already chosen David's successor. And almost as soon as Adonijah's celebration had started, it ended. A new cry pulsed through the streets of Jerusalem: "Love live King Solomon!" – Swindoll, p.95.

Book: 1 Kings chapters 1 & 2

Key Verse: 2:46: *"The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands."*

Look:

Vs. 1-4 – David is in his last days.

Power Vacuum:

David had his successor (1 Chronicles 28:5:-21). In fact, God had named Solomon to be the next king (1 Chronicles 29:1) but in his last days had not publicly announced it again, so into that vacuum another son rises up – Adonijah.

Chronicles leaves out the attempted coup by Adonijah, but 1 Kings lets us know that it was far from a smooth transition – but rather a bloody one.

Lack of Parenting:

Several factors seem to have contributed to Adonijah's bid to become Israel's next king. (1) He was apparently David's oldest surviving son. (2) He was a very attractive son (1 Kings 1:6).

David follows the same pattern of failed parenting that Eli the priest did (1 Sam.3:13) and that he himself had done with his other children (vs. 6):

- Never interfered after his son raped his daughter – 2 Sam.13:21-22
- Did little after Absalom his son killed another son – 2 Sam.14:33

Key Players in this drama:

Adonijah – David's oldest living son – who exalted himself (vs. 5). Probably about 35.

He got the support of the army via Joab and the priesthood via Abiathar. (vs.6). He thought that the kingdom was going to be his. Had a major feast but made sure that Solomon was not invited (1:9-10).

"The writer's description of Adonijah's fine looks recalls the glossy word picture of Absalom in 2 Samuel 14:25-27, as well as the depictions of Saul (1 Sam.9:2;10:23-24) and Eliab (1 Samuel 16:6-7). All these royal or potentially royal persons were physically impressive and either disastrous or rejected. Adonijah, our writer implies, belongs to that class." – Davis, p.17

Joab – The commander of the army – (vs.7, 19).

Abiathar – the high priest (vs.7)

Nathan – the prophet who had confronted David over his sins (2 Samuel 12) – (vs. 23-27).

Bathsheba – Solomon's mom – who was concerned about Solomon not being named king as promised (1:15 – 27).

Benaiah – David’s leader of his Mighty men and a commander over a third of the army (1 Chronicles 27:5).

While Adonijah was attempting his coup, Nathan had Bathsheba talk with David, and he himself respectfully confronted the king with the question: *“Is this something that my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?”* (vs.27).

Question: Why didn’t Nathan confront him more forcefully?

Answer: David was still the king – and deserved a degree of respect. Nathan is subtly trying to rouse David to action before Adonijah steals the kingdom.

“Nathan was the man who stood in the gap – his vigilance goaded David off his couch and protected Bathsheba and Solomon from almost certain death.” – Davis, p.19

The Transfer of Power: (1:28 – 37)

David announced that Solomon would indeed be king (28 – 30).

Adonijah – after being spared by Solomon (1:49 – 53), he tried to end run David after he died by asked his step-mom Bathsheba for his father’s concubine (2:13-25) – which would have signaled that he was the heir apparent.

“Obtaining a previous king’s wife was tantamount to claiming the king’s position (see 2 Sam.3:7; 12:8; 16:21). Hence Adonijah’s request could be construed as another (devious) move for the throne.” – Davis, p.29

The end result? Benaiah was instructed to take him out (vs.23-25).

David’s instructions to Solomon:

1. “Observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands. . .” (2:1-4)

David was a man after God’s own heart, and he instructs Solomon to do the same thing.

“The point is plain: law-obedience is the condition for promise-enjoyment.” – Davis, p.27

2. “Clean up” any remnants of rebellion: (2:5-9).

Joab:

The commander over the armies (vs.19). Joab had murdered Abner (2 Samuel 3:26-27) and Amasa (2 Samuel 20:9-10). He had also murdered David’s son, Absalom (2 Samuel 18:5, 9-15).

David tells Solomon to take care of him (have him killed) after he passed away (2:5-6) and Solomon does via Benaiah (2:28 – 34).

Abiathar – removed from the priesthood (which fulfilled God’s promise to do so) – 2:26-27.

Shimei – who had brought curses on David when he fled during Absalom’s attempted coup (2 Samuel 16:5-14). See Exodus 22:28 for the law broken by Amasa. David had promised basically that he would not kill him (2 Sam.19:23) but ordered Solomon to take him out. Solomon gives him an opportunity to live (1 Kings 2:36 –38) but Shimei violated that agreement (vs.39 – 40), so Solomon had him taken out by Benaiah (vs.41-46).

Bathsheba – beautiful (2 Samuel 12) but may have been lacking brains a bit (1 Kings 2:13 – 22) when she was deceived by Adonijah and asked for her husband’s concubine in marriage.

Question: Why do you think that David wanted Joab and Shimei eliminated?

Answer: They represented potential threats to Solomon’s claim to the kingdom.

The result: 2:46: *“The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon’s hands.”*

The rebellion was quashed, potential dissenters had been silenced, and a golden age of Israel was going to be ushered in.

(See “Kingdom Security” at the end of this lesson)

Lessons for us:

1. If God is going to reign sovereign in our lives – we too need to make sure that we:
 - a. Walk in his ways and obey his commands
 - b. Clean out all potential rivals or threats to his control over our lives. (see *Colossians 3:5-9* – “put to death. . . rid yourselves of. . .”)
2. God’s Sovereign Will will be accomplished

Question:

First Kings 1:5 records that Adonijah “exalted himself”, aspiring to be king. Solomon, by contrast, is relatively inactive – his selection as king comes about largely through the efforts of Nathan and Bathsheba. What can we learn about God’s sovereignty from this? (2:15).

“Who’s got the kingdom? And the central contention of the text is: Yahweh maintains his kingdom in all its precarious moments.” – Davis, p.16

“ . . .the church has repeatedly passed through such times when she has had to walk on the edge of disaster. Apparently, there is a hand that steadies her.” – Davis, p.17

Is God Running Your Kingdom?

“Kingdom Security”

“ . . .obedience is the internal means of kingdom security.

This catches us by surprise, doesn't it? We don't normally think this way. Why, a kingdom will be secure if it concludes advantageous trade agreements or cements a suave set of alliances with other states or maintains a sizable and state-of-the-art military. Obedience to the Torah of Moses? No self-respecting political scientist thinks that has much to do with state security.

We find the same sort of teaching in the New Testament. The man who hears Jesus' words and does them is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. The storms and floods and winds of life may beat upon him/it, but he will not fall (Matt.7:24-25). . . That is the point of 1 Kings 2:1-4. Whether it is the Davidic king or the disciple of Christ, true stability only comes through obedience to the Lord's commands.” – Davis, p.28.

Wisdom from Above

Hook:

What if:

- the President was the smartest, wisest person around. You could trust the decisions that he/she made.
- No one was at war – no people having to serve in combat, no wounded vets.
- Your bank account was good – and you were very comfortable with your income. Money was no problem for anyone.

Wouldn't life be sweet? That's the kind of life that the people of Israel enjoyed for years under the reign of David's son, Solomon. It was a "*Golden Age*" of this nation as God blessed them as He had promised He would do.

Book: 1 Kings chapters 3 & 4

Key Verse: 3:9 – *So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?*

Who was Solomon? What was he like?

Solomon the Peacemaker – 3:1. Married the Pharaoh's daughter, thus ensuring peace with Egypt.

Question: Did Solomon violate God's commands by marrying a foreign wife?

Answer: No. The prohibition was against marrying women from the land they were conquering – the Canaanites. See Deuteronomy 7:1-3.

This Deuteronomic Code doesn't forbid marrying non-Israelites outright. Rather, it lists seven Canaanite nations who are completely off-limits (the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites) of which "You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son." (Deuteronomy 7:3)

Solomon the Builder – 3:1 – would build the Temple that his father had wanted to build; built himself an elaborate palace; and built the walls up around Jerusalem – thus strengthening the fortifications.

Solomon the Worshipper – 3:3, 15. Solomon demonstrated his love for the Lord by following the practices of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places ([1 Kings 3:1-3](#)).

The Prayer for Wisdom:

It is usually in fairy tales or jokes, but we've all heard of someone being granted their wish. Who would have ever thought we would find God offering to give a man whatever he wished, but here it is. God asks him for what he would like, and his request was so he could serve others.

Question: What would you have asked for?

God's answer to Solomon's request?

Yes!

**He would be the wisest person there ever was or ever will be -vs. 12

God also gave him immense wealth and a promised long life if he would obey Him as David had done.

Lessons about Prayer from this passage:

"The true incentive for prayer: the generosity of God" (vv.5b, 13-14) . . . *Is this not the same God who meets us in James 1:5, where the apostle urges, 'If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask from the giving God, who gives to all generously. . .?'. . .Is he not the same God we see here in 1 Kings 3, who tells Solomon to ask and then in verse 13 says, in effect, 'and all of these things shall be added unto you'? Is this not the God of Matthew 7:11?"* – Davis, p.34.

"The true foundation of prayer: the faithfulness of God" (vv.6-7a, 8) . . . *Solomon's prayer, then, is a proclamation of the fidelity of God. . .we realize that as we rehearse Yahweh's record that we are coming to a faithful God."* – Davis, p.35

"The true anxiety of prayer: the people of God" (vv.7b-9) . . . *Solomon's answer revealed Solomon . . .Anxiety over the people of God controls Solomon's petition. . .I am not a king, but shouldn't I pray like one?"* – Davis, pp.36-37. See also Jesus' concern over Jerusalem (Matt.23:37) and Paul's concern (2 Corinthians 12:28).

"The true goal of prayer: the pleasure of God" (vv.10-14) . . . *I suggest that verse 10 holds out to us the goal of our praying – to please Yahweh . . . The goal of worship is to give pleasure to God, the only and true audience."* – Davis, p.38

The Proof of Wisdom - Solomon the Discerner – 3:16 - 28

Right away his wisdom was tested in the situation with the 2 prostitutes and the living baby (vs.16-22).

Solomon's ruling was: Cut the baby in two! This brought out the motives of the 2 women and showed who the real mother was.

The result? The people knew that God had blessed Solomon with wisdom (vs.28).

The Order of Wisdom – Chapter 4

Solomon the Administrator – 4:1-19

Solomon sets up an order his kingdom – so that things ran efficiently.

The result?

4:24 – Great peace for the nation and happy times for them – 4:20; 25; 8:66

3 Promises of God fulfilled:

1. **People** - 4:20 – People as numerous as the sand on the seashore – promise made to Abraham (Gen.22:17).
2. **Place** – 4:21, 24 - The territory from the Euphrates to Egypt. Promise made to Abram (Gen.15:18-21).
3. **Peace** – vs. 24-25. *“The stability and security God designed for Israel under the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:10-11).”* – Davis, p.48.

“This text is ecstatic over the fidelity of Yahweh, which should stir our joy, for this interim fulfillment under Solomon provides a sample of Yahweh's dependability for all his yet-to-be fulfilled promises.” – Davis, p.48

Question: What promises has God made us?

Answer: (a few verses that should give us hope!)

- God is faithful and will not let us be tempted beyond that we are able to bear – 1 Cor. 10:13
- God is faithful and just to forgive confessed sin – 1 John 1:9
- We should hold fast to the hope we have, because God is faithful – Heb.10:23
- God is a faithful Creator who will take care of us through suffering – 1 Peter 4:19
- God will answer our prayers – Matthew 7:7-11
- Seek His kingdom – and He will provide us with what we need – Matthew 6:25-33
- A home in heaven – John 14:1-3

The extent/areas of his wisdom: Chapter 4:29 – 34

- Solomon's wisdom is excellent because it came from God – vs.29
- Solomon's wisdom excelled in superiority to the "brains trusts" of their time – vs.30 – 31
- Solomon's wisdom excelled in its scope:

Poetry – vs.32

Songwriter – vs.32

Botany – plants - vs.33

herpetology – reptiles - vs.33

ichthyologist – fish – vs.33

birds – ornithologist – vs.33

zoologist – animals – vs.33

He was wiser than Robert Frost, Paul McCarthy, George Washington Carver, Jane Goodall, John Audubon, Jean Cousteau, Steve Irwin, Albert Einstein, and Thomas Edison all rolled into one!

Look:

Lessons for us:

1. God granted Solomon's wish for "wisdom". He's also promised to grant our prayers for wisdom if we will just ask Him – James 1:5. The question to ask ourselves: Do we ask?
2. God keeps His promises and is faithful. That should give us great hope as well, knowing that His yet-to-be fulfilled promises will be fulfilled.

Where God Dwells

Hook:

“Where does God live?” That’s a question that children ask as they try to understand who God is. Adults ask that question as well, especially when faced with calamities and hardships. “Where is God?” becomes a common question.

In this lesson, a house for God is built – a physical place where His presence would be and where people could turn for prayers and find forgiveness. It can be comforting to have a “place” where we can go and feel some closeness to God. But, was that the only place God where one could find God?

The Temple represented God’s presence, but as Solomon writes, God cannot be contained in a building. The presence of God can be felt and we can have closeness to God anywhere - it depends on one’s heart and willingness to follow God in all his ways.

A Temple will be built – but it only represents the true reality of God’s presence.

Book: 1 Kings chapters 5 – 9:9; 2 Chronicles 2 - 7

Key Verse: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chron.7:14)

Look:

The Temple Built:

Chapter 5: The time for building the Temple is right: (5:3-4)

David’s victories through God has brought the peace needed to focus on building the temple.

Solomon recognized that this was the fulfillment of God’s promise to his father – (vs.5)

“Yahweh’s promise, then, drives Solomon’s project . . . The real foundation of the temple does not consist of huge blocks of stone; the temple rests upon the promise of Yahweh . . . The promise of 2 Samuel 7:13 shows that Yahweh wanted the temple built in its time. It was the sacrament of his presence among his people.” – Davis, p.53

Question: What about Gentiles working on the temple? (5:1-11; 9:15-21)

Answer: Both Jews and Gentiles worked on building the Temple, because the Temple was to be “a house of prayer for all the nations” – Isaiah 56:7. Solomon may have anticipated that when he offered his prayer in 8:41-43 for the foreigners.

"... even heathen nations, whether friendly or conquered, took part in the building of the house for the God of Israel. . . 'For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations; (Ps.22:28); and 'all the heathen shall serve Him' (Ps.72:11)." – Davis, p.55

This was an immense project!

30,000 men with 3,300 foremen – 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stone cutters! (5:13-18).

Chapter 6 – God gives us the specifics of when the Temple was built (6:1).

This really marks the end of the exodus and celebrates the "rest" that had been promised to Israel. *"Yahweh would not rest (2 Samuel 7:6-7) until he had given Israel rest."* -Davis, p.61

"Why did the writer of Kings tie the building of the temple to the Exodus? With the building of the temple Israel would have an opportunity as never before in her history to realize the purpose for which God had formed and freed the nation. That purpose was to draw all people to Himself." – Constable.

Question: Why is there given more detail about the interior than the exterior of the Temple?

Answer: *"...the average Israelite would never have seen the interior of the temple. So perhaps we can understand the writer's focus on the interior: he gives Joe and Jane Israelite at least an 'audio tour' of Yahweh's holy place, enabling them to envisage what it is like . . ."* – Davis, p.63.

Question: Why such ornate furnishings?

Answer: *"... perhaps the message of temple gold is that nothing cheap should be offered to Yahweh but only what is a tribute commensurate with his splendor, whether, for example, in formal worship, biblical scholarship, or quality of daily work."* – Davis, p. 64

A Message From God: 6:11-13.

Right in the middle of chapter 6, between the exterior and interior of the Temple, sits vs. 11-13.

It seems that right in the middle of this project, God is reminding Solomon of His promises being conditioned upon Solomon's faithfulness.

"Solomon's personal fidelity to Yahweh's covenant law is the condition for Yahweh's gracious presence among his people through the temple. How critical one man's obedience will be." – Davis, pp.66-67.

Chapter 7 – The Bronze Pillars:

vs. 21 – the names of the bronze pillars in front of the temple:

one named: "Jakin" which means: "He will establish" – The Promise of God

the other: "Boaz" – which means: "In Him is strength" – The Power of God

Whenever one saw the Temple or came to it, these 2 messages were the first things to stand out as a reminder to them of their God.

“Don’t Christian believers still need to be freshly gripped with kingdom assurance (Jakin) and newly impressed with their own helplessness (Boaz)?” – Davis, p.74

The Temple Dedicated:

Chapter 8 – The ark completes the Temple – (vs.1-9) and when it is in place, the cloud filled the Temple and the priests couldn’t see to do their work.

Solomon talked about God’s promise being fulfilled – vs. 14 – 20 – promise made to David.

The Temple was to be:

a. A House of Prayer: vs.22 – 53 - Solomon’s prayer: This is the longest prayer in the Bible.

3 major parts to his prayer:

First, he acknowledges that God has been and is faithful to His promises/covenants. – vs. 23-24.

“When perplexed, try a little paganism. Ancient Near Eastern deities did not receive high grades for fidelity. They were notoriously – as current slang has it – flaky . . . Yahweh is not like any of these. He is incomparable; he always keeps his covenant and covenant love’ for/to his servants. In word, he keeps promises. That’s why his people are such hopeful hombres. His to-date fidelity breeds future expectancy. This is the theology you meet in Romans 8:32.” – Davis, p.85.

Second, he acknowledges that the Temple really can’t hold God – vs.27.

“Here he confesses the uncontainability, the unboxability of God.” – Davis, p.86

See Isaiah 66:1 – “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.”

See also Stephen’s words about this in Acts 7:48 - 50 as he reminds them of God’s history and the Jews unfaithfulness.

They accused Jesus of trying to destroy the Temple and Stephen speaking against the Temple (Acts 7:13-14) yet they had really despised it by their actions.

“Moses build the tabernacle and God’s glory graciously dwelt in the holy of holies (Exodus 40:34-38). Solomon built the temple, and once again God’s glory came in (1 Kings 8:10-11). But over the years, the worship at the temple degenerated into mere religious formality, and eventually there were idols placed in the temple (2 Kings 21:1-9; Ezek.8:7-12) . . . Even Solomon recognized the truth that God did not live in buildings (1 Kings 8:27) and the Prophet Isaiah made it even clearer

(Isaiah 66:1-2) . . . *The Jewish defense of their temple was both illogical and unscriptural.* – Wiersbe, p.432.

Where does God's dwell?

The tabernacle in the wilderness and the first years of the kingdom after the conquest of the land. (Exodus 29:45)

The Temple – built by Solomon, later destroyed and re-built by Herod. (1 Kings 5-8)

Among people – who are contrite and humble – Isaiah 57:15

In the person of Jesus – Immanuel – “God is with us” – Matthew 1:23

In believers - whose bodies are the “temple” of the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

In heaven – Revelation 21:3 - “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.”

Third, he prays about the reality of sin: vs.31-50

“There is a cold, hard realism in Solomon’s prayer that faces squarely the sinfulness of God’s people. And yet there is not despair . . . There is a way to restoration and forgiveness (vv.49b-50).”
– Davis, pp.88-89. (see vs. 46 – Romans 3:23 – There is no one who does not sin)

There are 7 petitions for mercy that Solomon makes in his prayer:

Situation	Our Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal sins – vs.31-32 	1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us Matthew 5:12 – Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defeat in battle due to sin– vs.33 – 34 	Mercy when we fall short – Hebrews 4:16 – we may receive mercy and find grace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drought – hardship due to sin - vs.35-36 	Help in getting back right, and being blessed again – vs. 36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Famine – vs. 37 -40 	Help in difficulties in life; Philippians 4:6-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grace on foreigners – vs.41-43 	Acts 10:1-4 (Cornelius’ prayers heard); Isaiah 42:6-7 (Israel to be light to the Gentiles)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help for Israelites in battle – vs.44 – 45 	Help with temptations – 1 Cor. 10:13 Matthew 5:12 – Deliver us from the evil one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help if in captivity – vs.46-47 	Help if captured by sin – Col.1:13;2 Timothy 4:18; I Thes.1:10

“Solomon holds together Yahweh’s severity and mercy. Do you see the realism and yet the hope here? Sinful Israel will suffer God’s severity (vs.46) but that severity may bring them to repentance (vs.47-48) and to restoration (vv.49-50).” – Davis, p.89

b. A House of Praise & Encouragement – vs. 54-61.

Thanking God for: Faithfulness to His promises – esp. to not leave or forsake them. (See Deut. 31:6; Hebrews 13:5-6)

Encouraging the people to:

- Turn their hearts toward God (vs.58, 61)
- Walk in His ways and keep his commands, degrees, and regulations (vs.58)

Encouraging God to:

- meet their daily needs – (vs.59)

The goal: So that all peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is no other (vs.60).

c. A house of Fellowship and Worship – vs.62 – 66.

The results of Solomon’s prayer?

1. 2 Chronicles 7:1 – Fire from heaven came down and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices.
2. The people continued to make sacrifices to the Lord (1 Kings 8:62-65), and everyone was glad and joyful for all the good things the Lord had done for David and the nation.
3. 2 Chron. 7:11 – 22; (1 Kings 9:3 – 9) - God’s response to Solomon – appeared to him at night:

Blessings and Curses:

Blessings: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chron.7:14)

Curses: If you or your sons turn away from me and do not obey the commands – I will cut off Israel – and this nation will become a “joke” (byword) to all who see it’s destruction and the destruction of this temple.

Took: Lessons for us:

1. God wants to be with us. Do we want to be with Him? Do we have hearts that are fully committed to Him?
2. When we are baptized, we become a “temple” of God. Do we make our “temple” a place of prayer, praise, and worship? Are our lives characterized by those actions?

Straight “A’s” in Wisdom, but an “F” on the Final

Hook:

He has had the most prolific golf career of anyone who has played the game. He is tied for first in PGA Tour wins and ranks second in men's major championships and also holds numerous golf records. Tiger Woods is widely regarded as one of the greatest golfers, and one of the most famous athletes of all time. In 2009, Woods' backstory came out, and it became known that he had numerous sexual affairs. That revelation led to his divorce, and his lack of ability to then concentrate on the game caused him to fall greatly in the golf rankings. He was not as focused or near as good as before.

Woods is not the only person to succumb to lust – to allow that sin to take over his life or to cause him great problems. The Bible names several people with lust problems:

- Judah
- Potiphar's wife
- Samson
- David

In 1 Kings, the greatest king that Israel ever had, who was also the wisest man ever to live – he too had a problem with lust! It's like the brain shuts off and the hormones take over – rational thought is out the window.

Solomon even describes this in Proverbs 7:7 with the young man who lacked judgment and fell prey to lust. He goes on to describe that giving into lust “will cost him his life.” (Proverbs 7:23), and ends the passage by saying,

*“Many are the victims she has brought down;
her slain are a mighty throng.
Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death.” (vs.27).*

Solomon is also about to experience that fall, and his sin will cause his kingdom to be divided, and the future of Israel will be changed forever.

What all happened to take Solomon off track? He had a great rise, but then he had a great fall!

Book: 1 Kings 9:10 – ch.11:13

Key Verse: *“As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.” 11:4*

Look:**Solomon's early character:**

At age 22 – 1 Kings 3:3 – Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David.

God was pleased with his request for wisdom – showing he cared about the people (3:3-10).

When he built the Temple, his mind was on pleasing God, and he said that he wanted “all the peoples of the earth to know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.” (8:5).

His wealth was immense (11:14) and his wisdom unmatched (11:1-9), but he was veering off track!

What got Solomon off track? He sought pleasures of earth.

(Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 to read of Solomon's own diary of his exploits in seeking pleasure.)

1. He became somewhat enamored with his riches. Ecclesiastes 2:8

His annual income? 666 talents of gold. That equals: \$1,257,600,000 per year!

Chapter 7 - The Temple was built in 7 years; his own palace took 13 years to build (7:1). A crack in his faith foundation? He spent more time on it than the Temple.

What is displayed here is far more Solomon's 'riches and honor' than his 'wisdom.'

“It took a great deal of money to support his splendid manner of life, and after Solomon's death, the people of Israel protested the yoke they were wearing and asked for the burden to be lightened (12:-1-4)”. – Wiersbe, p.438

Some of what he spent money on:

- A throne to sit on inlaid with ivory and covered with gold six steps high with lions on each step - 9:18 – 20
- All of his eating utensils and drinking goblets – 9:21
- Exotic animals (apes, baboons) – 9:22

God had blessed him with immense wealth. What did he do with it? He indulged himself and lived a lavish lifestyle. Nowhere do we read that he took care of the poor, or helped others with his wealth.

2. He engaged in many building projects (9:17-19) – whatever he desired to build.

This would be one of the things that later he would write was an empty “chasing after the wind” – Ecclesiastes 2:4 -6

3. He trusted in his own military might, rather than the Lord’s protection. (10:26).

He accumulated horses, which the king was not to do (Deut.17:14-20). He was trusting in his own army, rather than God to keep his kingdom secure (Ps.20:7).

4. Solomon gave in to lust (11:1-2).

He loved many women. Today, we might call him a “sex addict” because his addiction to women outweighed his love for God. (700 women and 300 concubines). If you had sexual relations every day with another woman, it would take him 3 years to be with each woman!

See Ecclesiastes 3:9 – He amassed a harem but found it unsatisfying.

Question: How did this lead to his demise?

Answer:

- a. First, he married women that he should not have married – they were forbidden. –vs.2.

See Deuteronomy 7:1-3.

- b. What he had been warned about in the law – that foreign wives would turn his heart away from God – happened.

See Deuteronomy 17:17 – the king was not to take many wives for this very reason.

- c. Solomon then began to worship those other gods.

Who were these other “gods”?

Molech – worship of him included child sacrifice (Leviticus 18:21).

Chemosh - Chemosh seems to have had a taste for blood. In 2 Kings 3:27 we find that human sacrifice was part of the rites of Chemosh.

Ashtoreth - Prostitution was practiced in her name, and she was served with immoral rites by bands of men and women. Shrine prostitutes and sexual immorality were a part of this worship. Any surprise given Solomon’s lust?

Solomon had encouraged the people to have hearts that served only the Lord, and he himself had said there were no other gods (8:60).

He had been warned by God about the danger of turning to false gods and worshipping them (9:6-7), yet he allowed his wives to pull him into idolatry and his heart was no longer fully devoted to the Lord (11:4).

In the ark of the covenant were only 2 things: The two tablets containing the 10 commandments. Symbolically this was to be the center of their faith. Yet Solomon here is violating the first 2 commandments and leading his people to do the same:

- **You shall have no other gods before me**
- **You shall not make an idol, and bow down to worship it.**

“When Solomon was born, he was greatly loved by the Lord and given the special name, “Jedidiah” which means “beloved of the Lord” (2 Sam.12:24-25). But now we read that God was angry with Solomon because the king’s heart had turned from the Lord.” – Wiersbe, p.441.

Question: What was Solomon’s reaction to God’s judgment? 9 – 13

Answer: None recorded. We see none of the remorse:

- like his father showed when confronted by Nathan (2 Sam.12).
- like Ahab (1 Kings 21:28-30)
- Like Manasseh (2 Chron.33:10-13)

He will try to kill his successor (12:40), but no remorse.

“We must take a minute to be frightened. ‘When Solomon was old. . .’ How that text ought to goad older believers to pray the last petition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt.6:13a). Is there not a warning to churches as well, who have a fixation on youth ministry and a love affair with young marrieds and/or young families? Need we not exercise far more vigilance over our over-sixties crowd, many of whom will doubtless meet the major troubles of their lives in their final years?” – Davis, p.113.

Took: Lessons for us:

1. Are there other “gods” in your life? If so, what are they?
2. The pursuit of earthly pleasures at the expense of our relationship with the Lord – *disastrous!*

God has blessed us as a nation with wealth – what as individuals are we doing with it?

3. May the Lord protect our hearts and keep us ever focused on Him so that we do not turn away from Him.

“So there is the tragedy: a story that begins with ‘Solomon love Yahweh’ (3:3) and ends with ‘Solomon loved many foreign women’ (11”1). How these ‘book end’ texts should sober us. Where are my affections? Has an imperceptible drift taken place in them over the years? Am I headed for tragedy because I have left my first love?” – Davis, p.114

The Kingdom Torn! – Rehoboam's Folly

Hook:

"The last half of 1 Kings recounts the division of the kingdom into north (Israel) and south (Judah) and the successes and failures of their kings. The picture is not a pretty one. Immorality and idolatry were rampant, as both nations acquiesced to the lifestyles of the surrounding nations and closed their hearts to the desires of God. Of the thirty-nine monarchs between the two nations, Scripture characterizes only eight of them as godly rulers." – Swindoll, p.99

Book: 1 Kings 11:14 – chapter 14; 2 Chronicles 10 - 12

Key verse: *"So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord. . ."*
-vs. 15

Solomon's adversaries:

"Because of his unfaithfulness to God, Solomon found himself with adversaries for the first time in his life. Two were people who had had grudges against David, and they resurfaced at this particular time. But a third one was the person God had determined would follow Solomon as king over Israel." – Campbell, p.96

1. "Then Yahweh raised up an adversary to Solomon, **Hadad** the Edomite. . ." (vs.14)
2. "Then God raised up to him an adversary, **Rezon** son of Eliada. . ." (vs.23)
3. "Now **Jeroboam** son of Nebat. . .he lifted up his hand against the king" – (vs.26)

All of these were part of God's promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7:14 – that if David's son (Solomon) did wrong, he would punish him – and Hadad and Rezon would do just that.

God's been working behind the scenes, and has been involved with developing these men to trouble Solomon if he chose to disobey God.

Question: What if Solomon had not turned his heart away from God – what would have happened to these men?

Answer: God would have used them in other ways – or at least not had them rise up against Solomon. Kind of like the potter with the clay, God is able to use people as he knows is best to serve his purposes. (Romans 9:14-21)

The prophecy of division:

11:26 - 36 – God chooses Jeroboam to be the king over the 10 tribes in northern Israel (vs.31), and promises to be with him, and build a dynasty for him if he will walk in God's ways and do what was right.

Rehoboam – Solomon's Son

He Would Not Listen: - Chapter 12

Rehoboam was the only son of Solomon that we know by name. Imagine: All of those wives, and scripture only records one son. Makes you wonder what happened to his other children – how far off were they led astray.

“ . . . God had appointed a man named Jeroboam to rule after Solomon (1 Kings 11:29-31). But Solomon had named his son Rehoboam as successor (11:43). As you might expect, there is going to be a little conflict between Jeroboam and Rehoboam.” – Campbell, p.102

Who was Rehoboam?

1. An Arrogant King – 12:1-17

“Rehoboam didn't have the gift of relating to people and understanding their needs.” – Wiersbe, p.445.

Jeroboam had returned from Egypt after the death of Solomon, and now leads the group of leaders that has an audience with Rehoboam. (12:2).

Their request? Relief from the heavy taxation and forced labor under Solomon's reign – vs.4.

“Sadly, the elders of Israel made no spiritual demand or request on Rehoboam. Seemingly, the gross idolatry and apostasy of Solomon didn't bother them at all.” – Guzik

Rehoboam is going to advice shop:

“This is a common phenomenon today - what some call advice shopping. The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counselors you will listen to even when they tell you what you don't want to hear.” - Guzik

He already had in his mind what he wanted; He did not appeal to any sense of shared vision and purpose-he simply wanted the people to follow his orders out of the fear of a tyrant.

vs. 7 – “How would **you** advise me?” - Solomon’s older advisors: Treat the people with kindness and they will serve you.

vs. 9 - “How should **we** answer these people. . .” - Rehoboam’s younger advisors: Make it tough on them and they will fear you and serve you.

These younger men were ones he had grown up with, privileged children who were set on pushing around their position on people and being harsh.

Rehoboam had grown up in the palace and known wealth and privilege and power. He wanted to continue that by being harsh.

“If the taxes would be reduced, no doubt Rehoboam would have to do without some of the tax-paid luxuries he was enjoying.” – Martin.

Question: What are ways that people are tempted to “advice shop?”

Answer: When it comes to moral issues, often people look to others who will validate the sinful things they are doing.

“Everybody’s doing it!”

“No one will notice”

“God just wants you to happy”

vs.13 – “verse 13 says that Rehoboam answered the people “roughly” (that is, with harshness in his voice). A gentle answer may not have satisfied the people, but the harsh answer served only to fan the flames of discontent even more. Rehoboam’s decision shattered any hope of further unity (verse 14)” – Martin.

vs.14 - *“With a dozen rash words, Rehoboam, the bungling dictator, opened the door for four hundred years of strife, weakness, and, eventually, the destruction of the entire nation.”* -Dilday, in Guzik.

Rehoboam acted foolishly. Ironically, his father Solomon worried about losing all he worked for under a foolish successor:

“Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.” – Ecc.2:18-19.

****At the same time, the focus of the text is not Rehoboam's stupidity, but God's divine sovereignty – vs.15. God was directing events.**

“So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord. . .” -vs. 15

2. An Angry King – vs.18 - 24

vs. 16-19 - The kingdom splits.

From this point on in the history of Israel, the name "Israel" referred to the 10 northern tribes and the name "Judah" referred to the southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

Rehoboam tries to get the people back through force:

- a. first by his administrator** - sending out his administrator over forced labor. The result?
The people stoned him, and Rehoboam fled back home.

“Adoram was the wrong man for Rehoboam to send. He was famous for his harsh policy of forced labor (1 Kings 4:6 and 1 Kings 5:14). Rehoboam probably sent Adoram because he wanted to make good on his promise to punish those who opposed him. His tough-guy policy didn't work.” - Guzik

- b. with an army** – vs.21

God though intervenes with the prophet, Shemaiah – (vs. 22-24) and stops a civil war.

“It was Rehoboam's first wise move in the whole chapter. . . Yet here they submit. Yahweh insists this whole affair is his doing. And both the king and militia give it up.” – Davis, p.132.

3. An Apostate King – 14:21 - 31

For the first 3 years of his kingdom, he and the priests walked in the ways of the Lord (2 Chron.11:16-17). Jeroboam is setting up a false religion in the northern kingdom and those who are faithful are drifting to Judah to worship God as they should.

Read 2 Chron.12:1-2.

Question: What changed?

Answer: Once he and the people had built up their defenses in many towns, they thought they were self-reliant, they abandoned the law of the Lord.

****2 Chronicles 12:2 – “he had become strong” (NIV) “strengthened himself” (KJV) – He was no longer relying on the Lord.**

Question: Aren't we too tempted to forget God and his blessings when things are good?

Answer: Yep! See Proverbs 30:8-9 – If we have too much, we may be tempted to say, “Who is the Lord?”

Question: What did Rehoboam do?

Answer: set up false places of worship – vs. 23 – 24 which included male prostitutes.

Question: Where did this originate?

Answer: his mother was an Ammonite (vs.21) and so the practices of those people along with others who were supposed to be destroyed resurfaced.

God's loving discipline –2 Chron.12:3-16

God directs the king of Egypt, Shishak to invade Judah.

“One Egyptian inscription states that Shishak took 156 cities” – Wiersbe, p.452. In spite of Rehoboam's new defenses, Shishak's army defeated town after town.

The prophet who had told Rehoboam to not attack his brother, appears again and tell him:

“This is what the Lord says, ‘You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak.’” – 2 Chron.12:5-6.

Rehoboam's response? Humility, and said, “the Lord is just.” vs.6.

God's response?

- a. He did not destroy them but delivered them – vs.7. His anger turned from them (vs.12).
- b. At the same time, they remained subject to Shishak, so they would know the difference between serving God and serving kings of other nations – vs.8
- c. The kingdom suffered also a loss of their previous glory. -vs.9-11.
“Rehoboam may have bought him off with all the loot. In any case, it hurts – seeing all the glitter and glory of the previous era being carted off to Egypt.” – Davis, p. 169

Despite all of the bad, the writer tells us: *“Indeed, there was some good in Judah.”* -vs.12

Rehoboam's overall legacy: 2 Chron.12:14 – *“He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.”*

Look:

Took: Lessons for us:

1. Watch the counsel you get. Seek godly counsel.
2. Hear the voices of those who are oppressed and hurting. If you are in a position to ease a burden on others, it would be wise to do so.
3. Watch relying on your own strength, intelligence, wit, etc. for living life. Trust in the Lord, not our ways.

“There is a huge difference in the manner that Rehoboam strengthened himself and the way in which his grandfather David strengthened himself. Rehoboam strengthened himself over the kingdom of Judah – his focus was on earthly matters and his control over the people (2 Chronicles 12:1). That was a far cry from the approach that David took when he faced challenges: “David strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). Being strong in the Lord is of greater importance than material/earthly strength.” - Martin

The Kingdom Torn! – Jeroboam & Bootleg Religion

Hook:

“During the 1920’s in the United States the law forbade the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages. This was the Prohibition Era. Some folks, refusing to give up their toddies, decided to make their own. These bootleggers engaged surreptitiously in bootlegging and so produced bootleg, their own home-brewed elixir. That’s what Jeroboam does with religion in this text; he makes his own -bootleg religion.” – Davis, p.135

Book: 1 Kings 11:14 – chapter 14

Key verse: *“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways. . .” – 13:33*

Who is Jeroboam?

“He was a doer. . .he was a man who first caught Solomon’s attention because he was busy, efficient, dependable, and productive.” – Wiersbe, p.453.

Parents were Nebat and Zeruah – but father had died, and his mom was a widow – 11:26.

He is also someone that God has chosen to wrest away 10 tribes of the kingdom for a separate kingdom. God has the prophet Ahijah to make this prophecy, demonstrating it by tearing a cloak into 12 pieces and giving 10 of them to Jeroboam (11:29 – 39).

God promises Jeroboam:

- to be with him if he will walk in the ways of David – 11:37- 39
- to build him a dynasty as enduring as David’s – 11:38

Solomon’s reaction? Tried to kill him (11:40).

Jeroboam’s 3 serious mistakes:

1. He didn’t believe God’s promises (12:25-33).

“The prophet made it clear that political division did not permit religious departure.” – Wiersbe, p.453.

“But Jeroboam got into trouble when he began talking to himself . . . Now Jeroboam speaks ‘in his heart’ and within two verses religion has gone bovine. . . how crucial to guard one’s own heart.” – Davis, p.137.

Jeroboam was even more foolish than it first appears. "It literally says, 'Therefore the king took counsel of 'himself' " (Dilday) "The phrase discovers the fountain of his error, that he did not consult with God, who had given him the kingdom; as in all reason, and justice, and gratitude he should have done." -Guzik

Jeroboam operated out of:

Fear – vs. 25 – 28. He thought that the people would worship in Jerusalem and then come and kill him.

Insecurity – built up defenses (vs. 25) to protect himself, rather than trusting in what God had told him.

His “bootleg” religion:

- He established a worship center in Israel – a golden calf in Dan, and one in Bethel. That way, people wouldn't go to Jerusalem in Judah. This was in direct violation of Deut.12:2-3.
- He built shrines on high places for worship (instead of destroying them)
- He appointed priests on his own – who were not even Levites. This included himself! (vs.32-33)
- He set up his own festivals and worship times (“a month of his own choosing” - vs.33).

“It is possible-perhaps even likely-that Jeroboam intended the gold calves to represent the God of Israel. This wasn't the introduction of a new god, but a perversion of the proper worship of the true God.” – Guzik

“Jeroboam had determined that neo-bovinism would do more for royal stability than covenant orthodoxy.” – Davis, p.157.

“Unauthorized priests at unauthorized temples could never have access to God or present sacrifices acceptable to God. . . The religion he invented was comfortable, convenient, and not costly, but it wasn't authorized by the Lord.” – Wiersbe, p.455 – 456.

“Religion for Jeroboam was not a ‘given’ but something pliable to be massaged and shaped as one prefers.” – Davis, p.141.

2. He didn't heed God's warnings – Chapter 13 (a Prophet and Loss Statement)

The prophet Ahijah appears while Jeroboam is performing some sort of ritual, and makes a pronouncement of judgment (vs. 1 – 3).

King Jeroboam reacts by stretching out his hand to point and have the prophet seized (vs.4).

King Jeroboam sees three miracles in just a few moments:

- The altar splits apart – (vs.5)
- His outstretched hand shrivels up (Hebrew word means: “dried up”) – (vs.4)
- His hand is restored when the prophet interceded to the Lord for him (vs.6)

(Note: Jeroboam asks the prophet to intercede “with your God”. He’s not Jeroboam’s God anymore – vs. 6)

Question: We hear people say all of the time, “If I saw a miracle, it would convince me and I would believe!” This story argues differently. Can you think of other times that miracles were performed, and it had no lasting effect on those who experienced them?

Answer:

- Pharaoh in Exodus – Ex. 7-14
- The children of Israel – who would grumble all of the time and not grow in their faith – Exodus 15:22-24.
- The people who believed the 10 faithless spies’ report – Numbers 13
- The Pharisees who saw the miracles that Jesus performed, and yet attributed them to Satan – Matthew 12:22-24
- Resurrection of Lazarus – John 11:45-48

This story in Chapter 13 seems bizarre and out of place, but it parallel’s the life of Jeroboam and God:

Jeroboam	Prophet
Told what to do – follow the commands of God	Told what to speak – and what to do afterwards
Jeroboam didn’t obey	Prophet didn’t obey
Jeroboam will die	The prophet did die

Why the old prophet lied to the prophet from Judah we aren’t told. Perhaps he just wanted to rub shoulders with someone who had a recent prophecy from God. The old prophet was living in the Northern Kingdom – where they were apostatizing at an alarming rate.

The prophet from Judah listened to the old prophet who was lying, but didn’t inquire of the Lord himself to see if what he was saying was true.

“Surely, 1 Kings 13 teaches that the given word of God is adequate for his servants and that it is not safe to receive anything beyond or beside that word.” – Davis, p.153.

“When an emotionally disturbed man told Charles Spurgeon that God had told him to preach for Spurgeon the next Sunday, Spurgeon replied, ‘When the Lord tells me, I’ll let you know.’” – Wiersbe, p.458

The focus on the story is on obedience to God’s directions/commands, and the consequences of disobedience.

The end result? vs. 33 – 34 – it had no effect on Jeroboam – *“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways. . .”*

“What about Jeroboam? He simply repaired the altar and went on worshipping there (vv.33-34). The word of God was his mercy – and he despised it.” – Davis, p.152.

3. He used deceit to ask for God’s help – Chapter 14 (his second Prophet and Loss statement)

“There was trouble in Tizrah, Jeroboam’s son was ill; seriously ill, it seems. That was a double difficulty, for the hopes of a dynasty (11:38) could rest on a male heir, and yet parental compassion must have played its part. Even calf worshippers care about their kids.” – Davis, p.157

Question: When does Jeroboam seek help from God?

Answer:

“When he’s in trouble. Nothing wrong with that in itself (see Ps.50:15). Jeroboam, however, turned a deaf ear to the word of God in chapter 13; yet now when dark days come he seeks what he had despised. Jeroboam wants the help of the word in the emergencies of life but not the rule of the word over the course of life. He desires only the occasional word of God. He wants the word of God for his crisis but not for his routine or practice. He craves light in his trouble but not on his path.” – Davis, pp.159-160.

Jeroboam’s son was sick, and he wants to know if he will recover. But, he wants his wife to go in disguise to ask Ahijah. He even has her take gifts appropriate for a commoner/farmer (see 1 Sam.9:7-8) rather than gifts a king would bring (see 2 Kings 8:7-9).

Question: Why the deceit?

Answer: The prophet had admonished him to follow God like David (11:37-38), but he had not done that.

Now, *“Ahijah clearly categorizes the king’s offense as a sin against grace.” – Davis, p.160.*

vs.7-8 – God had:

- Raised him up from among the people
- Made him a leader
- Tore away the kingdom and gave it to him

Instead, Jeroboam had:

- Not been like David in following God
- Made other gods and idols of metal
- Put God behind his back – completely ignored him

The dire prophesy: All of the male descendants will be cut off and die – there will no chance of a lasting dynasty here. God's view of the king's children? Like poop! (vs.10)

- Those who die in the city – the dogs will eat
- Those who die in the country – the birds will eat

The son Jeroboam was concerned about – would die as well (vs.12-13), but he would be mourned because he was the only good son Jeroboam had.

His end? 2 Chron.13:20 - The Lord struck him down and he died.

“Just as David was God’s standard for measuring the good kings, Jeroboam was God’s example of the worst of the bad kings. . .Nobody could sin like Jeroboam, son of Nebat. During his twenty-two years as king of Israel, he led his family and the nation into ruin.” – Wiersbe, p.460-461.

In Sum: What’s really important?

“What then is the implication of these observations? Why, that the word (as opposed to the world) is unimpressed with Jeroboam’s achievements. The writer has little interest in Jeroboam’s military and political successes but has spilled all his ink on how the king responded to the basic covenant demand. Accomplishments don’t matter; fidelity does. Verse 19 is frightening: all the energy and exertion you have poured into making your mark in your calling may prove one huge irrelevance. The only thing that matters is whether you worshipped Yahweh alone. Were you contented with the real God? We think verse 19 is only a throw-away bibliographical note. Actually, it’s a disturbing world view.” – Davis, p.165.

Look:

Took: Lessons for us:

1. Are you following the word of God, or are you throwing in some “calves” of your own choosing?
2. How is your fidelity to the Lord God? Nothing else in life really matters other than our faithfulness to Him.
3. God blessed Jeroboam, but he trusted himself and turned from God. Pray that the blessings God has blessed you with do not turn your heart from Him.

Kings: Where Are Your Hearts?

Hook:

The Date: February 2, 2020

The Occasion: Super Bowl LIV (54)

The San Francisco Forty-Niners are dominating the Kansas City Chiefs. It seems that there will virtually no way the Chiefs can win the game – down 20-10 with only 6 minutes to go. Then, it happened. Kansas City began making plays, and the 49er's began making mistakes. Within those last 6 minutes, the Chiefs scored 21 points to win the game, 31-20. An exciting finish, unless. . . you were the 49er's. They played well for 54 minutes of the game, but in the last 6 minutes failed to finish well.

That happens many times in the lives of people, where they trip up, stumble, and don't finish the course of their walk with God well. Something happens to upset them, turn their world upside down, and their faith wanes as a result.

In this lesson, we'll see different levels of heart devotion to God in the lives of several kings of Judah and Israel, and the implications of that devotion or lack thereof.

Book: 1 Kings 15 – 16:28; 2 Chron.14 -16

Key verse: *"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."* – 2 Chron.16:9

King 1: Abijah – Some devotion - 1 Kings 14:31 - 15:1-8

Son of Rehoboam. Length of his reign – 3 years (2 Chron.13:1-2).

In his life:

- He committed the same sins as his father – vs. 3
- His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord – vs.3

Yet, God kept his promise to preserve Judah and Jerusalem because of David – vs.4-5

"So why is there still a kingdom in Judah? Because of David. Because of his faithfulness (v.5). But more than that – because of Yahweh's faithfulness (v.4)." – Davis, p.172

An example:

Abijah did rely on the Lord when his kingdom of Judah was attacked by Jeroboam, the king of the northern tribes. He confronted Jeroboam's army and said, *"Men of Israel, do not fight against the Lord the God of your fathers, for you will not succeed."* – 2 Chron.13:12.

The troops from Israel did attack, but were soundly defeated, and the men of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord – vs.13-18.

So, Abijah did have some devotion to the Lord, and was protected by God.

“God uses imperfect people to do His will, if only they will trust Him.” – Wiersbe, p.463

King 2 – Asa -- “Wholehearted Devotion”- except for the end. . .

He began well: 1 Kings 15:9-14; 2 Chron. 14:1 – 15:19

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, like David had done.

1 Kings 15:14 – “Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life.”

*“The Hebrew phrase for a committed heart here is “**lebab shalem**”, a covenantal term that means ‘wholeheartedly devoted.’” - DeMuth*

A prophet had come to him with a word from the Lord that said, *“The Lord is with you when are you are with him.”* – 2 Chron.15:2

This gave Asa courage, (2 Chron.15:8) and he:

- Deposed his own grandmother, Maacah, who worshipped a false god
“ . . .his purge extended even to the royal household. No pampered exceptions. He even deposed Maacah from her position as ‘big lady’ (gebira) in the realm.” – Davis, p.173
- Got rid of male prostitutes
- Got rid of idols
- Tore down pagan altars
- Fortified the cities - (2 Chron.14:6)
- Developed a large shield-bearing army of three hundred thousand men, and a small shield-bearing army of 280,000 men.
- “He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to obey his law and commandments” – 2 Chron.14:4

He continued well – 1 Kings 15:14

“Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life”

The result? The Lord gave him rest, and no one was at war with him – 2 Chron.14:6

When an Ethiopian army came out against him, he turned to the Lord for help:

Asa sought the Lord. *“Lord, there is not one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you.”* (2 Chron.14:11).

The result? The Lord struck down that army and Judah had a great victory (2 Chron.14:12-15).

“There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign” – I Kings 15:19

He didn’t finish well – 2 Chron.16:1-14

In his thirty-sixth year, he turned to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, to help against the northern kingdom’s king, Baasha who had blockaded the country of Judah. He bribed Ben-Hadad with silver and gold out of the temple’s treasury.

A seer named Hanani came and confronted Asa about this and his lack of faith in the Lord to deliver him.

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” – 2 Chron.16:9

Asa, instead of being humbled: (vs.10-12)

- Put Hanani in prison
- Brutally oppressed some of his people
- In his pain with his diseased feet, did not seek help from the Lord

Question: “What can we learn from Asa? Regardless of age, ministry position, or status, we will leave this earth either as one who finishes well or as one who stumbles. How can we finish well, with wholehearted devotion to God?”

Answer:

Remember God after your victories. Asa somehow forgot how God had delivered he and his kingdom before.

Seek God when pain (physical, spiritual, or psychological) comes. Asa turned away from God – not to Him.

“Asa walked with God many years. It wasn’t until year thirty-five that he stopped seeking God, instead relying on a man-centered shortcut. Walking with God is a tedious marathon full of sweat and grit and rugged determination. Running a marathon means enduring all the way to the finish line.” - DeMuth

Kings of Israel – No Devotion - Meanwhile in Israel. . .Evil Men in the Hands of a Good God - I Kings 15:25- 16:27

While Judah has a stable kingdom (Asa king for 41 years), Israel begins to go through a succession of kings:

Nadab – 1 Kings 15:25-28

- Son of Jeroboam
- Ruled 2 years
- Evil – followed the sins of his father
- Was killed by Baasha – an outsider (maybe one of his commanders)

Baasha – 1 Kings 15:27 – 16:7

- Was used by God to fulfill God's judgment against the house of Jeroboam. (vs.29 – *"did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed. . ."*).
- Reigned 24 years
- Because he didn't follow God, although God had lifted him up (16:2), the same punishment that fell to Jeroboam's household would fall to his as well – 16:2-4.

Question: Did Baasha have a choice to follow God?

Answer: Yes. This lets us know that Baasha had a choice: To be humble before God and follow Him or be like the kings of Israel that went before him. He chose the latter.

"In verse 2 the Lord through Jehu tells Baasha that rather than realize that it was wholly impossible for a man who was not of aristocratic blood, and who came from such common stock of a small tribe (Issachar), to rise up and become a king over so formidable a people as the 10 northern tribes could not have happened unless the Lord God made it happen. And so rather that Baasha understanding that he was only an instrument to bring about God's wrathful prophecy on the house of Jeroboam, and instead of responding by drawing near to God and serving Him, Baasha became the most idolatrous and evil king over Israel to that point in history." - Seeds of Abraham Ministries

"Hence Baasha, had he only realized it, stood next to the scourging kindness of Yahweh, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but finds it when they turn from their ways and live (Ezek.18:23)". – Davis, p.181.

"Where is Yahweh in all of this? In verses 29-30. How is he there? By his word. . . Baasha the butcher was simply a servant of Yahweh's word. This is basic biblical theology: Yahweh uses evil men to punish other evil men and later judges the evil instruments he used for their own evil (see Isaiah 10:5-19; Jer. 27:1-7)." – Davis, p. 178

Elah – 1 Kings 16:8

- Son of Baasha, and ruled 2 years
- Assassinated by one of his generals
- *"Elah appears to be a dissolute man who would rather get drunk with his friends than serve the Lord and the people."* – Wiersbe, p.466-467.

Zimri – 1 Kings 16:9 – 20

- A military general
- Killed the king Elah while he was drunk
- Killed off all of Baasha's family – vs.11 (as well as friends of the family)

- Killed himself in a fire when he knew the armies of Israel had come to get him - vs.16 – 20)
- Reigned only 7 days – and only in Tirzah, a city of Israel

“...Yahweh seems to regard this perversion as so culpable that he judges a man for not making a change within a seven day’s reign! Seven days is a brief time; seven days is a responsible time. It’s long enough to show your colors.” – Davis, p.188

Omri – I Kings 16:21 – 28

- Reigned 12 years – but followed in the ways of Jeroboam in doing evil

The Bible account doesn’t record this, but Omri militarily oppressed Moab, and he married his son to a Phoenician – Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal. The Assyrians for the next 100 years referred to Israel as the “house of Omri.”

*“The writer is not saying that he is ignorant of Omri’s achievements – he is saying they don’t matter. The Bible does not call Omri’s pursuits stupid, like Elah and his orgy; nor are they fleeting like Zimri’s rise, for Omri institutes a substantial regime; but they are inconsequential. **When the first two commandments (Exodus 20:3-6) are despised nothing else matters.**” – Davis, p.191*

Ahab – I Kings 16:29 – 34

- Reigned 22 years
- Was exceedingly wicked – vs. 30 - 33

Question: What was the common characteristic of the kings of Israel?

Answer: They walked in the ways of Jeroboam – doing evil:

- Nebat – 15:26
- Baasha – 15:34
- Elah – 16:13
- Zimri – 16:19
- Omri – 16:25 – 26
- Ahab – *“did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, but he also married Jezebel. . .”*
16:30
“Ahab. . .did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.” – 16:33

“...the word of God not only rules and controls history but also defines sin and condemns those who persist in it.” – Davis, p.192.

*“The word I have here translated ‘exasperate’ is **ka’as**, often rendered ‘provoke’ in standard translations. . . That’s what we do, our writer implies, when we defy the first and second commandments – we will exasperate and infuriate Yahweh. . . Our culture, for the life it, cannot understand how a deity could be upset over varied religious preferences. How could there be a God who could possibly get exasperated over anything, let alone idolatry? Why should any god care that much? We may not buy our culture’s judgment, but we may have imbibed enough of its attitude, so that we find it hard to hear this text in all its frightfulness.” – Davis, pp.192-193*

Look:

Took: Lessons for us:

1. Baasha was used by God and had the opportunity to turn to God as a result. God uses us to do His will also (See Phil. 2:13). Do we allow God to use us, and then give him the credit for whatever good may occur? Does our success in life lead us to thank God, or turn from Him?
2. We will leave this earth either as one who finishes well or as one who stumbles. Do you have a *lebab-shalem* – a heart completely devoted to Him?
3. Pray to God that you will keep your focus on Him, even when things are seemingly dark. The same God that has carried you thus far will be there to the finish. Let’s finish well.
4. Is God our one and only God? Are there idols we are tempted to worship, trust in, and follow that eat away at our allegiance to the one true God? Our God is a jealous God who really demands our true devotion – wholehearted – to Him.

These Are the Days of Elijah

Hook:

The song, “Days of Elijah” begin with these 2 lines:

*“These are the days of Elijah,
Declaring the word of the Lord.”*

The northern kingdom of Israel has been plunged into darkness by the unwillingness of its kings to follow the word of the Lord and to trust in His leading. Instead, their wickedness has taken Israel into greater and greater apostasy, leaving behind the very God who had delivered them from Egypt and given them a good land to live in. Ahab is now the king in Israel, and it is a dark time indeed. Onto the scene bursts Elijah, and a series of miracles are seen that give hope and light to a dead and dying nation – The real God is not dead, He is very much alive and ready to show His true power over the pretend gods that Israel was worshipping.

This chapter records 4 different miracles that Elijah either performed or experienced.

Book: 1 Kings 17

Key verse: *“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the world of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.’” –vs. 24*

Look: 4 Miracles From God:

1. A nationwide drought – 17:1

“Elijah the Tishbite suddenly appears on the scene and then leaves as quickly as he came, only to reappear three years later to challenge the priests of Baal. His name means ‘The Lord (Jehovah) is my God,’ an apt name for a man who called the people back to the worship of Jehovah.” – Wiersbe, p.467

“God held back the rain because of the fervent prayers of Elijah, and He would send the rain again in response to His servant’s intercession (James 5:17-18). For the next three years, the word of Elijah would control the weather in Israel!” – Wiersbe, p.468

Question: Why no rain?

Answer:

1. It was a punishment for idolatry – see Deut.11:16-17

2. Water is also such a key element we and all living things need to survive – so a drought like this would be difficult to survive well in.
3. It would be an obvious sign that the false god they worshipped, Baal, was indeed, powerless.

“The rain delay will also strike a blow at the alleged prowess of Baal. However one cuts it Baal was a fertility god, a storm god, who, among other life-giving activities, sent rain to fructify the earth. . . . Such meteorological displays were signs of Baal’s vitality, Elijah’s ‘no dew or rain’ then constitutes a challenge to Baal. Ahab and Israel will now be able to see what sort of fertility god Baal is. If he cannot produce in the area of his expertise, in his specialty, his reputation will suffer a shattering blow.” – Davis, p.202

2. Food from unclean birds – 17:2-7

He will be fed by birds that are unclean (Deut.14:14).

“The raven was considered ‘unclean’ and ‘detestable’ on the Mosaic list of forbidden foods (Lev.11:13-15; Deut.14:14). Yet God used these birds to help sustain the life of his servant . . . The Lord provided the food and the birds provided the transportation!” – Wiersbe, p.468-69.

Question: Why have Elijah hide himself?

Answer:

1. So there would be an absence of God’s word during this tough time. A second type of “drought” occurs – as God tells Elijah to hide himself, and Israel has no word from God.

“The disappearance of Elijah spells the absence of the word of God from the life of Israel. Israel’s judgment is the drought of the land and the silence of the Lord.” – Davis, p.207

2. Jezebel is killing off the Lord’s prophets (18:4).

“Clearly, this was Yahweh’s witness protection program designed to secure Elijah from Ahab’s malice.” – Davis, p. 206

3. Food from empty vessels. – 17:8-16.

After the brook dries up, God is going to have Elijah move north.

“God was sending Elijah into Gentile territory, and since Zaraphath was not too far from Jezebel’s home city of Sidon, he would be living in enemy territory!” – Wiersbe, p.469

“Elijah is sent to Baalsville in Gentileland.” – Davis, p.211

The woman had been instructed by God (vs.9) but that doesn’t mean she is a follower of God. She even says, “the Lord your God.” (vs.12).

Question: Why Zarephath?

Answer:

1. A test of faith for Elijah perhaps.
2. A judgment on Israel. Read Luke 4:23-26 as Jesus reads a scroll and talks in the synagogue.

“Zarephath, however, is not entirely good news. Jesus got himself into nearly mortal trouble by bringing it up in the Nazareth synagogue one Sabbath day:

There were many widows in Israel, I can assure you, in Elijah’s day, when heaven remained shut for three years and six month and a great famine raged throughout the land, but Elijah was not sent to any one of these: he was sent to a widow at Zarephath, a town in Sidonia (Luke 4:25-26).

Why did a mere Old Testament allusion throw the hometown folks into such a rage (Luke 4:28)? Because they understood Jesus’ point. There were plenty of widows in Israel qualifying as valid home missions projects during Elijah’s time, but Yahweh directed Elijah to none of them; instead he sent him to relieve that desperate widow in Heathensburgh. In doing so Yahweh was bypassing Israel; in conferring his favor on this gentile he was removing it from Israel. Elijah’s journey to Zarephath, therefore, was an act of judgment upon Israel.” – Davis, p.212.

Question: How could Elijah say vs.13-14 to the woman? (Elijah said to the widow in effect: We will trust God on a day-by-day basis).

Answer:

“Because he knew from personal experience, not secondhand stories or academic theories, that God will come through when He says He will.” – Swindoll, p.23 - 24

“The woman’s assets were few: a little oil in a flask, a handful of barley in a large grain jar, and a few sticks to provide fuel for a fire. But Elijah’s assets were great, for God Almighty had promised to take care of him, his hostess, and her son.” – Wiersbe, p. 469

Question: With these 2 miracles that Elijah has been a part of, what are they teaching him?

Answers:

- To rely on God, even in extreme circumstances
- That God keeps His promises

4. Life for a Dead Boy – 17:17 – 24

The woman’s son after a while became sick and died. The woman, grief-stricken, brings him to Elijah and confronts him about her son’s death.

What were problems in her thinking?

1. *"It appears she thought that with the prophet in her home she was immune to problems. A lot of people think like this and they are helped in their thinking by the prosperity gospel that we hear from a number of radio and tele-evangelists. Some people think if they do the right things, follow the right principles, listen to the Bible, live around other Christians--life will flow along smoothly."* – Keathley.

2. *"She felt guilt and thought perhaps she was to blame for the child's death. . . she may have thought all suffering was caused by sin."* - Keathley

"The mother's response is to feel guilty because of her past sins. . . Or maybe she felt that God had informed her guest about her past life, something that she should have confessed to him." – Wiersbe, p.470

Read John 9:2. We have a tendency to associate bad things happening with sin. That's also what the disciples thought. But Jesus said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned."

"Many Christians know her mind. On a sunny day they may remember John 9:3, but let God's hand strike and in their despair they dredge up all sorts of guilt that God must be punishing." – Davis, p.220

It is not always good theology to associate suffering with sin – the story of Job is a key example of that.

The son is obviously younger, because she is carrying him.

Elijah simply asked for the boy and carried him to the upper room.

"Do you know what really impresses me here? It's the silence of Elijah. Somehow he knows that nothing he can say at this moment will satisfy this grieving mother. No words from him can soothe her stricken spirit. So he does not argue with her. He does not rebuke her. He does not try to reason with her. He doesn't try to remind her of all she owes him or of how ashamed she should be for blaming him. He simply asks her to place her burden in his arms." – Swindoll, p.61

Question: Why did the child die?

Answer: The answer is simply: We don't know. God had promised them food to sustain them through the remainder of the drought – vs.14. One would assume that would mean that they would live and survive it.

"But there's more of a difficulty in this text, for Yahweh's promise (vs.14) and provision (vs.15-16) indicated that his intention to sustain the woman and company. Hence the death of her son seemed to contradict Yahweh's declared purpose. Why does Yahweh act this way? Why does he follow an everlasting jar of meal with the devastating death of a son?" – Davis, p.219

"Both she and Elijah are confronted with the same question: Why did the God who promised life bring death instead?" – NIV Study Bible notes

That's Elijah's question: Why have you brought tragedy to this woman by causing her son to die?

Elijah's response to God: (vs.21)

- Prayer for the life of the child to return
- Stretching himself out on the boy three times

Question: Was it okay for Elijah to touch the boy?

Answer: It was an unclean act

"Ceremonially, that was an unclean act, because a man of God was not to touch the dead." – Swindoll – p.65

(See Numbers 19:11 & 16. A person who touches a dead body was unclean for 7 days.)

Question: Had anyone ever been raised to life from the dead before?

Answer: No! Elijah was asking for the "impossible." Here he was demonstrating tremendous faith, and he acted on that faith.

God specializes in impossibilities:

1. *"Ah, Sovereign Lord, you! Behold have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you."* – Jeremiah 32:17
2. *"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all mankind; is anything too hard for me?"* – Jeremiah 32:27
3. *"For nothing is impossible with God."* – Luke 1:37
4. *"Jesus replied, 'What is impossible with men is possible with God.'" – Luke 18:27*

This may well be one of the miracles of faith that the Hebrew writer pens in Hebrews 11 when he is talking about the heroes of faith: *"Women received back their dead, raised to life again,"* (vs.35).

"It simply testifies that in the face of Yahweh's perplexing, seemingly absurd and contradictory ways, he will show himself faithful to this people at the end of their trial." – Davis, p.223.

What was Elijah's progression of faith?

"He learned his theology of faith in the secret hiding place at Cherith. He was given the opportunity to develop it during his advance training at Zarephath. But it was not until he stared death in the face, literally, that he personified it." – Swindoll, p.70.

Took:

1. *"The God of Elijah is your God, and He is still the God of impossible situations."* – Swindoll, p.68. Do you trust Him in your life's impossibilities?
2. Are we trusting in God's working in our lives to bring about the faith we need for trials ahead?
3. Elijah's prayer was powerful in its effect – and we are challenged to pray in faith like Elijah to bring about more fully God's presence in our lives – James 5:17-18.
"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." – James 5:16

Will The Real God Please Stand Up?

Hook:

On television, there was a show that debuted back in 1956 called, *“To Tell the Truth”*. The show was set up to have three contestants who all claim to be a certain person. One person is telling the truth – the other 2 are imposters. The game show panel is then allowed to ask them questions, as they try to figure out who the “real” person is. After they have finished questioning the contestants, the panel of judges submit their votes for who they think is telling the truth. Then, the game show host asks, “Will the real _____ please stand up?”

In our passage in 1 Kings, we are presented with two deities – both claiming to be the “real” God. Their prophets of each will try to get them to send down fire to burn up a sacrifice – thus proving their power and position. Of course, one is Jehovah, the other is an idol. But, the people are asked to make their choice – give their vote – as to who is the “real” God.

This dramatic scene plays out and the “real” God does stand up!

Book: 1 Kings 18

Key verse: *“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”* – vs. 21

Look:

This is the beginning of a God-War – vs. 2-16.

The story of 1 Kings 18 is designed to show two things:

1. That the drought was not just an unfortunate act of nature (global warming!) but rather divine discipline from God.
2. That the rain and end of the drought were the work of the one true God.

“This chapter and the Carmel incident were designed to teach us that our false gods of whatever sort – materialistic, idealistic, or human – are totally inadequate. Our false gods, of course, include whatever we place our trust in rather than in the true and living God as revealed to us in the Bible.” – Keathey.

vs. 1 – 2

Elijah received the word of the Lord to go and present himself to Ahab. Previously, he had been told to go and hide himself (17:3).

3 Things we learn about the “Real” God:

1. The Service of the Real God is Diverse: (vs. 3-15)

Obadiah – the quiet servant of God – vs. 3-14

He was a devout follower of God (vs.3), and had been since his youth (vs.12). He had protected 100 prophets of the Lord – in two groups of 50 – and had hidden them in caves and sustained them with food and water.

“Obadiah saves prophets. Ahab wants to save mules. . . He hides prophets of Yahweh at great risk. If discovered, he would lose far more than his spot at the top of the civil service sector. . . His courage stymies the full success of her Yahwist liquidation policy.” – Davis, p.229

Question: Is Obadiah right to be afraid?

Answer: Yes! Ahab and Jezebel as dangerous people!

“Now, clearly, Obadiah is afraid Ahab will execute him should he herald Elijah’s return; he alludes to such a fate three times (vv.8.11.14). Imagine that: a servant of the Lord who prefers not to die? Is that so strange?. . . It took guts to do what Obadiah did (vv.4, 13). . . We shouldn’t sit in our comfortable chairs and berate Obadiah because he is not Elijah Jr.” – Davis, pp.230-31

“The Bible never tells us that there is only one kind of faithful servant (1 Cor. 12:4-6); it never demands that you must be an Elijah clone.” – Davis, p.231.

Read Mark 9:41: Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Our acts of service don’t have to be out-front and flashy – many of God’s servants are faithful in quiet, unseen ways that bring a solid foundation to the church and to their homes.

2. The Demand of the Real God is Direct: (vs. 20-21)

God insists that we make a real choice – Him or a false god.

This is His first commandment: *Thou shalt not have no other gods before me* – Exodus 20:3

Question: Can you think of other times where the challenge to make a choice was given?

Answer:

Moses – Deuteronomy 30:19 - 20

Joshua – in Joshua 24:14-15

Elijah is giving the people the opportunity to declare their faith –vs. 21. Perhaps they kept silent because of 18:4, or because they have been so indoctrinated with false worship that they are confused.

Their response? Silence. Really, no choice ***is*** a choice.

The case for Baal worship:

- a. **It had an appeal of a royal sanction.** *“Power tends to be persuasive”* – Davis, p.232
- b. **It had the appeal of tradition/history.** Baal worship went all the way back to the time when they first entered the Promised Land.
- c. **It had an appeal of relevance.** Baal was the “god” of fertility. If you live off the land, you want it to produce! Also, it appeals to sensual lusts.

Elijah’s question demanded a choice and a lifestyle:

“This is no mere academic question. Elijah’s formulation assumes that theology leads to discipleship. . . He is not an idea you play with but a King to whom you submit. You’d better understand up front all that is involved.” – Davis, p.233

Read Luke 14:25 – 33. Jesus challenges us as well in our discipleship.

The same is true regarding Jesus Christ: Is He just your Savior, or is he also your Lord? Some want Him as their Savior, but don’t want to submit to Him or follow Him as Lord over their lives.

3. The Nature of God is so Different – vs. 19-20.

- a. **God is not limited by geography.** (vs.19-20).

The showdown will be on Mt. Carmel (**the Mt. Carmel Corral!**)

Mt. Carmel is actually Baal’s own homefield – so technically he should have the advantage.

Question: are we ever tempted to limit God’s presence to a place?

Answer: Sometimes people regard the building as “holy” – when in reality, of course, God is everywhere.

One aspect of false religion is “totemism” where some sort of object becomes a “totem” to be worshipped. Think about native Americans: A tree, a river, a mountain, etc. could become places that were holy and to be revered.

b. God is not limited by numbers. (vs. 22, 25)

450 false prophets of Baal to 1 prophet of God.

God has always specialized in small numbers:

Promise of God in Leviticus 26:7-8 – 5 will chase 100, one hundred will chase 10,000!

Joshua 23:10: One of you chases a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, as He promised.

Question: Can you think of other examples?

Answer: Some examples:

Gideon – 300 men against the army of Midian – Judges 7

Shamgar – Judges 3:31 – killed 600 men with an ox goad

Abishai – 2 Samuel 23:18 – killed 300 men with a spear

c. God does not need emotional inducements to act – (vs.26-29).

Elijah lets the prophets of Baal go first. They get more and more frenetic and animated. Elijah says to them, “Shout a little louder – he may be on the commode pooping!” (vs. 27).

Question: What inducement did Elijah use?

Answer: Faithful Prayer – James 5:17-18

Elijah’s 2 prayers:

1. For God to answer his prayer for evidence of His deity. -vs.36-37

“In contrast to their hyper-kinetic frenzy, Elijah’s approach is simplicity in itself. He prays (vv.36=37). Fire falls (vs.38).” – Davis, p. 237.

This reminds us of the Lord’s model prayer (Matthew 6) and it’s simplicity. Or the simple prayer of the publican for forgiveness (Luke 18:9-14). God does not need a fevered, animated show to move Him to action: A simple prayer of a humble heart is all it takes.

Question: Why not just let it rain?

Answer: False teachers would have said that Baal had recovered and that he brought the rain.

“So, before it is safe for Yahweh to send rain, Baal must be discredited – clearly, publicly, obviously, decisively, in living color, and on national primetime. Hence, the extreme measures.

After Baal is exposed as a non-god, no one with a clear head should think the rain comes from him. Hence, there will be a God contest in Israel.” – Davis, p.227-8.

The altar, the sacrifice, and the ditch around it are soaked with water three times.

After Elijah’s simple prayer, fire fell from heaven and totally devoured the sacrifice, the altar, and the water around it.

vs. 39 – 40:

The people’s reaction? “The Lord, He is God!”

There was one other thing to do:

Seize the prophets of Baal and have them executed.

Question: Why not just let them go? Tell them to stop it, now that they have been discredited?

Answer: This was in obedience to the Lord’s command: Deuteronomy 13:13-18; 17:2-5.

“ . . .this Kishon slaughter was not an act of personal revenge, but of capital punishment in line with the Torah. Elijah was carrying out the sanctions of Deuteronomy 13. . .” – Davis, p.241

2. For rain to return to the earth – vs.42-44

Why did it take 7 times for the answer to the prayer appear?

We aren’t told – but what we are told, is that his fervent supplication to God was heard and rain came!

Elijah tells Ahab to go eat and drink, because rain was going to come – vs. 41, and sure enough, it did!

Elijah runs ahead of Ahab (probably an Olympic record run!) and heavy rain comes.

Took: Lessons for us:

1. Is God the Lord of your life? Are you using your abilities to serve Him – whether out front or behind the scenes?
2. Remember that God is not limited by geography – which means:
He is always with us, He can be accessed at any time, any place. We really are not alone!
3. Are your prayers simple and from the heart? Remember Jesus’s words: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” – Matthew 6:8

God's Prescriptions for Depression!

Hook:

"Depression" has been called the "common cold" of mental disease because most people suffer from it at times during their lifetime. It is debilitating, and causes a person to focus inward, often rejecting an outside perspective. Depression is also sometimes known as "anger turned inward" which means that when a person is upset about something that seems to be unchangeable, that anger turns inward into depression. So, for many, the root of depression lies in anger over the unchangeable.

Elijah in this passage shows classic signs of depression, and that anger about what he perceives as an unchanging evil in Israel. Jezebel is still a source of much evil, and she is focusing her murderous intents on Elijah – and he is depressed.

"We look at these heroes of faith or listen to many Bible teachers today with their promises of deliverance. Then we think about our own struggles and failures and wonder if there is not something terribly wrong with us. We have adopted the idea that we should have somehow reached the point that we do not struggle. The myth is believers who are truly spiritual never get down. . . But that kind of theology does not fit with the Word of God." - Keathley

God is aware of Elijah's discouragement and he is not giving up on Elijah. He wants His servant to change and see that with man things may seem impossible, but that it not so with God.

Book: I Kings 19

Key Verse: *"Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" – 19:17*

Look:

Read verses 1 – 10:

When we are "high" the only place to go is lower, and Elijah is going to experience that. He's had the "high" of the victory on Mt. Carmel, the affirmation from the people that Jehovah is God, the execution of the false prophets, and the life-giving rain has come in answer to his prayer.

Question: What's the evidence that Elijah was depressed?

Answer:

- Self-esteem low: "I am no better than my fathers" – vs.4
- Wanted to die – vs. 4
- Faith – Was afraid and ran – vs.3 - 4
- Purpose – felt defeated – vs. 10, 14. There is a sense that he was broken by Israel's unbelief.
- Was exhausted – vs. 5
- Support – felt alone – vs. 10, 14
- Isolated himself – vs.3-4. Elijah isolated himself, going about as far away as he could go – the southern limit of the land – and then another full day's walk further into the wilderness.

First Prescription: Rest! – vs. 5-8

It's important for Elijah to have his body get the healing it needs.

An angel was sent to minister to him, and met his physical needs for food and rest. *"The angel's presence is, in and of itself, instructive and corrective. . .now, in his greatest moment of defeat, he is fed hot-baked bread and water, served by none other than the angel of the Lord. Did God care for Elijah. . . I think we know the answer."* – Deffinbaugh.

Second Prescription: Refocus! vs. 9 - 14

Elijah found a cave to stay in (vs.9) and there God asked him why he was there.

His answer: I have been zealous for the Lord, but the Israelites have rejected your covenant, and I am the only one left (and they are trying to kill me too!)

Question: What was Elijah focused on?

Answer:

- Jezebel and her threat
- How his zeal has not resulted in any lasting change – Israel is still apostatizing
- How he feels all alone

Question: Did he have a valid reason for fearing Jezebel?

Answer: Yes! She was a real threat – she had already been killing the prophets of God (18:4).

Real change in most organizations comes from the top. Had Israel really changed? No – Jezebel is still the driving force and she is super-anti-God.

“Jezebel was still wearing not only the pantyhose but the pants in the kingdom and calling the shots.” – Davis, p.258.

“Sometimes Christians slip into thinking that if we only get the truth to people or press upon them our most rigorous and cogent arguments, then. . . But let Jezebel be your teacher about what the human heart is like. There was a blaze of light on Mt. Carmel, but unless Yahweh grants internal light to see his external light, the darkness remains.” – Davis, p.267.

God wants Elijah to refocus on Him. The question He asks is not a rebuke, but rather:

“. . .a question of tender kindness, to relieve the full, burdened heart of the prophet, that he, to whom the great privilege of being able to complain of his sorrow had so long been denied, might be moved to reveal his desire, to pour out his whole heart before the Lord.” – Menkin, in Davis, p.260

Almost like a counselor who says: *“Why are you here? Tell me what’s going on?”*

The Lord has him stand out the outside of the cave, and displays of nature’s power are shown:

- A mighty wind – vs.11
- An earthquake – vs. 12
- A fire – vs. 12

These could have been a message to Elijah that basically is making the point:

“Do you realize how powerful I am? If you did, you wouldn’t be afraid.”

It’s like the passage in 1 John 4:4:

“You, dear children, are from God have overcome them, because He that is within you is greater than he that is in the world.”

Then, a gentle whisper is heard by Elijah (vs.12-13), and that caused Elijah to come out of the cave.

“I believe he was supposed to learn a very simple but important lesson: God is not to be sought in the spectacular.” - Deffinbaugh

God then asks the question again (vs.13) and gets the same answer from Elijah (vs.14).

Third Prescription: Reinvest! - vs.15 - 16

Do meaningful work:

"It is as if Yahweh says, 'You're absolutely right, Elijah! I agree with your assessment and your charges are true. Therefore, I am going to bring covenantal judgment, and I want you to return and to set apart my instruments of judgment. And yet there will be a remnant that I will keep faithful'. Yahweh does not rebuke Elijah but agrees with him; he does not condemn Elijah but confirms his diagnosis!" – Davis, p.262.

What work is there to do?

Anoint 2 kings:

- Hazael over Aram (Syria)
- Jehu over Israel

These 2 kings will be instruments that God uses to bring judgment on the idolaters in Israel.

"The people the Lord named weren't the most especially significant in the social structure of that day. Hazael was a servant to King Ben-Hadad, Jehu was a captain of the army, and Elisha was a farmer. But by the time Elisha and Jehu completed their work, Baal worship was almost wiped out in Israel (2 Kings 10:18 – 31.)." – Wiersbe, p.481

"God was calling Elijah to stop weeping over the past and running away from the present. It was time to start preparing others for the future. When God is in command, there is always hope." – Wiersbe, p.481

Fourth Prescription: Reconnect! - vs. 16, 19-21.

Anoint a successor/sidekick to work with you. Elijah wouldn't be alone in his work – but would have someone to train and take over after him.

Even Jesus needed others when he was in the garden – Mt. 26:36-38

Elisha is a farmer, probably from a wealthier family (12 pair of oxen), who has to give up:

- His family – kisses them goodbye –vs.20
- His security – slaughtered the oxen and uses the wood and cooks them for a feast – vs.21
- *"As a result, he acted on his faith by following God's call. He was willing to be uprooted from his quiet, peaceful, and rural life with its financial security to follow the Lord."* - Keathley

Fifth Prescription: Realize You're not Alone! - vs. 17

Question: What had Elijah forgotten about others who were faithful to God?

Answer: There was Obadiah, and at least 100 additional prophets that Obadiah had been protecting – 18:2-4

God's promise to us: We are not alone – Hebrews 13:5

Took:

1. When we get down about life, it is important for us to:

- Take care of physical needs (we are biological creatures whose biology affects our psychology)
- See God through the pain or discouragement
- Reinvest ourselves in meaningful work
- Reconnect with others – instead of isolating ourselves
- Realize that we are not alone

2. In dark times, focus on the promises we have from God. Here's a few:

- I will never leave you or forsake you – Hebrews 13:5
- There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – Romans 8:1
- In all things God works for the good of those who love him – Romans 8:28
- If God is for us, who can be against us? – Romans 8:31
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord – Romans 8:39
- Seek first God's kingdom, and the things we need will be given to us as well – Matthew 6:33
- Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you – God answers our prayers – Matthew 7:7-8

3. Expect that discouragement will come in our lives. Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Paul, and even Jesus experienced that. Don't take it as a sign of faithlessness or a lack of God's love – but instead refocus on our Lord who loves us.

Getting Clear about God & His Justice

Hook:

Herman Melville wrote a novel called *Moby Dick* and gave the name “Ahab” to the captain who was off-kilter and bound for destruction. Israel’s king, Ahab, was particularly evil, and his wife was a driving force in that. The name “Jezebel” is used to describe a woman who is the very lowest of society.

“ . . .each chapter emphasizes the failure of Ahab and how the word of God stands opposed to him. Because of Ahab’s spineless moderation, both Ahab and Israel stand under doom (20:42); because of his heartless oppression, his household will be exterminated (21:21-24); and because of his thick-headed obtuseness, his life is forfeit (22:19-23, 29-38). No other king receives such a literary battering from the sacred writer. . .” – Davis, pp.279-280.

Book: I Kings 20-22

Key Verse: *“There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife.” 20:25*

Look:

1. Getting Clear About God – Chapter 20

The characters:

Ahab – king of Israel.

Beh-Hadad – king of Aram (Syria)

Several prophets – who would bring God’s messages to Ahab

vs.1-12

Ben-Hadad is wanting to control the trade routes through Israel, and sends 2 messages to Ahab that both indicate that he wants to take over the land.

Ahab hopes that his concession to Ben-Hadad’s first request will be enough, but when Ben-Hadad demands more, Ahab says he cannot comply.

The result? Ben-Hadad is planning on grinding Samaria to dust.

Ahab’s reply? Don’t boast before you have done anything.

The drunken Ben-Hadad plans for his attack.

vs. 13 – 21:

A prophet comes to Ahab and tells him that the vast army of the Arameans will be given to his hand in battle.

Note: Ahab did not send for the prophet, God sent the prophet to him.

Ahab was very wicked, and militarily he was lost, he would be destroyed.

Question: Why did God intervene?

Answer: So you will know that I am the Lord.

There is no way Ahab can win this one – so the victory will be clear because it will have to be miraculous.

Similar to Romans 6:6, 8:

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. . . But God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

<i>Condition?</i>	Ahab – powerless	Us – powerless – Romans 6:8
<i>Who moved first?</i>	God – sending the prophet (vv.13, 22, 28)	God – sending His Son – John 3:16
<i>Result?</i>	Victory (2 times)	Victory - 1 Cor.15:57

“All this help- the promise, the direction, the warning – is purely Yahweh’s gift. Ahab never seeks a lick of it; it is God-initiated and prophet-imposed. And utterly baffling. When viewed in the larger context we are thrown for a loop. Why is such kindness shown to the Ahab of chapters 17 -19? Why does this king of 16:29-34 receive any goodness from the Lord? . . . In the victories over Aram Ahab and Israel are to see that Yahweh is there in saving help, unasked, undeserved – and that both king and people should acknowledge and adore.” – Davis, pp. 283-84

The question to ask ourselves is: Not “*Why Ahab?*” but rather, “*Why me?*”

The results of the battle?

The young officers go out to meet Ben-Hadad’s men, and slay them, and the rout is on. The Arameans are defeated soundly – vs.19-21.

b. Clarity about God's Power vs. Fuzzy Theology:

The Arameans fall prey to bad theology: They think: They whipped us because their gods are powerful in the hills. If we fight them on the plains, we'll win! – vs.23-27

“Syrian theology simply says that there is some turf beyond the reach of Yahweh's power. . .we may catch ourselves assuming that God is at work in religious things but not in routine things.” – Davis, p.287

vs.23 – 30:

They come back again, and again, the prophet assures Ahab that he will win, because of the Lord – vs.28

The battle? 100,000 Arameans fall that day, and 27,000 more die when a wall collapses on them.

vs.31 – 34:

Ben-Hadad pleads for his life, and Ahab calls him, “My brother” (vs.32) and lets him go free.

c. Clarity about God's judgment:

A prophet announces God's judgment on Ahab for failing to destroy Ben-Hadad.

Note: This is similar to Saul's failure to carry out the Lord's command to destroy Agag and the Amalekites completely in 1 Samuel 15.

The strange story of the prophet asking to be struck (vs.35-37) shows the seriousness of following God's word. *“Instead we should confess the clip is both clear and frightening. It is not safe to ignore the word of Yahweh. That is the point.” – Davis, p.289*

“There is no question of relations between private individuals; just as Ahab was not so much victor as Jehovah, so Ben-hadad was not Ahab's but Jehovah's prisoner. Ahab had no right to let him go free and unpunished, for by doing so he arbitrarily interfered with the righteous decision of God. . .” – Davis, p.291

“Should we not rather commend Ahab for his enlightened magnanimity and admirable restraint? We may be tempted to think Ahab is more like Jesus than Yahweh is. If so, we only show that we have never really heard Jesus (e.g. Mark 9:42-43, 45, 47-48).” – Davis, p.293

“1 Kings teaches me that I must get clear about God: about his grace (vs.1-22) – it surprises me, for I don't understand it. . . about his power (vv.23-30) – it rebukes me, because, Syrian-like, I try to limit it; about his judgment (vv.31-43) – it should sober me, even though, like Ahab and my own culture, I try to dismiss it.” – Davis, p.293.

2. Getting Clear About God's Justice & Mercy – Chapter 21

Ahab wants something he can't have – Naboth's vineyard.

Question: Why did Naboth refuse Ahab's offer?

Answer: Naboth was following Leviticus 25:23-28.

"If he need not sell, then he should not sell. Hence his refusal. He treasures Yahweh's land-gift passed down via his ancestors more than making bucks or placating kings." – Davis, p.297

Question: What was Ahab's sin?

Answer: Covetousness.

"'Thou shalt not covet' is the last of the Ten Commandments but perhaps it's the most difficult one to obey. . . The first nine Commandments focus on forbidden outward conduct – making and worshipping idols, stealing, murder, and so on – but this commandment deals primarily with the hidden desires of the heart." – Wiersbe, p.486-87.

Ahab sulks, and Jezebel takes over. Her philosophy of life seemed to be: *"Take what you want and destroy anyone who stands in your way."*

Her plan? Set up Naboth at a feast and have 2 witnesses (Deut.17:6-7) accuse him of cursing God and the king.

The punishment? Stoning. Not only is Naboth stoned, but so are his sons (2 Kings 9:26).

The result? Naboth is out of the way and Ahab can exercise a sort of "imminent domain" and take the land for himself.

Ahab's and Jezebel's sins: Covetousness, bearing false witness, murder, theft.

Man's justice: Perverted, twisted, not fair. Even in the justice system in the U.S., at best it still sends innocent people to prison, and guilty people are convicted. The wealthy can control it to get their advantage.

Everything seems to be working well for Ahab, until Elijah shows up again – vs. 17. (Ahab calls him his enemy! vs.20.

God's justice: Fair.

". . .no one is exempt for the scrutiny and judgment of God's word. . . No one, whatever his status, whatever her success, can wiggle, squirm, or run beyond the boundaries of that jurisdiction." – Davis, p.303

- The punishment?
Ahab will die and his blood will be licked up by dogs in the same place Naboth's was shed.

- Jezebel will be eaten by dogs
- All of Ahab's male descendants will be killed (like Jeroboam's and Baasha's were).

God sees injustices and He will avenge – Romans 12:19.

Ahab's reaction: Humility before God.

God's mercy: vs. 27 - 29

God's reaction: vs. 29: postponement of the judgment.

"Don't you see your God here? Can't you sense Yahweh's enthusiasm for mercy as he asks Elijah, 'Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me?'. . . Isn't Yahweh's mercy itself an appeal to Ahab to go into a deeper repentance? For if Yahweh so responds to Ahab's initial expressions of remorse, how much more mercy might he find should he persevere in repentance? Who is a God like Yahweh with such gusto for mercy? . . . And that mercy never changes. Otherwise, why does Jesus hang around Laodicea, knocking on doors (Rev.3:30)?" – Davis, pp.308-309

Don't we want a God who will be merciful, even to an Ahab who humbles himself? That means he will also be merciful to us who need it just as badly – Hebrews 4:16.

Read also Micah 7:18; Isaiah 30:18

Took:

1. Thank God for his justice – because it means that injustices and wrongs committed will not go unpunished. God is fair.
2. Thank God for his mercy – and His willingness to hear our hearts when we humbly come to Him in prayer. God is merciful.
3. Thank God that He is everywhere, and no matter where we go, God will be with us. God is for us (Romans 8:31).

Getting Clear about God's Word

Hook:

Night has often signified something bad. Like the old phrase, “things that go bump in the night”. That phrase is believed to have started back in the 18th century as part of a prayer. The prayer would go,

“From Ghoulies and Ghoosties, long-leggety Beasties, and Things that go Bump in the Night, Good Lord, deliver us!”

It seems that bad things happen in the night, and the image of darkness is oftentimes an ominous one.

John 13:30 tells us about Judas' betrayal: “As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”

There would be beautiful, encouraging words spoken by Jesus that night, but when Judas left, it was night. A darkness of evil was in the process of occurring – horrible betrayal, desertion, abuse, false witnesses, beatings, and crucifixion.

At the end of 1 Kings, we end with “the night”. The book ends on a low note. It began with the promise of Israel's greatest king, David being fulfilled. It reaches its zenith with his son Solomon's reign. Sadly though, it end with the reign of one of the most wicked kings ever to be in power in Israel. The kings of Israel, though warned, never seemed to catch this truth: There is a God in Heaven, one God, and His Word is truth.

Book: 1 Kings 22

Key Verse: “. . .as the word of the Lord had declared.” - 22:38

Look:

1. Repudiation of God's Word – vs. 1- 28

The characters:

King of Israel – Ahab

Jehoshaphat – the king of Judah

Zedekiah – a false prophet

Micaiah – a true prophet of God

The main thrust: The Word of God will destroy those who defy it

vs.1 – 3

Ahab was promised this territory from Ben-Hadad when he defeated him in chapter 20:34. It's been three years, and he still doesn't have this land back, and it's a major north-south trade route east of the Jordan river.

"That means whoever controlled the site collected 'caravan transit revenues.' In short, it's a shame to have a turnpike running through a place if you aren't sitting in the toll booth." – Davis, p.31.

The kingdom of Israel under Ahab and the kingdom of Judah under Jehoshaphat are at peace – mostly because of a marriage alliance between them (Ahab's daughter has married Jehoshaphat's son – 2 Chronicles 18:1; 2 Kings 8:18).

So, when Jehoshaphat comes to visit Ahab, Ahab says that needs to get that land back, and asks his daughter's father-in-law if he will help him.

Jehoshaphat was faithful to God (vs.43 -44) but made 2 decisions that were not smart:

1. to ally himself with Ahab via marriage.
2. to agree to go into battle with him (vs.3). After the battle is over, a prophet from God confronted him with this decision: "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?" – 2 Chronicles 19:2.

But, he has the sense to ask for God's wisdom and guidance in this (vs.5).

There are 400 prophets that Ahab calls and they all are in agreement – go and fight and you will win! (vs.6 -7).

Question: Who are these prophets?

Answer:

They claim to speak in God's name (vs.11), claim to have His spirit (vs.24), promise God's success (vs.6).

The problem? They were prophesying things that were false.

Perhaps what's going on is that they are trying to say what Ahab wants to hear.

Other passages with similar dangers?

Jeremiah 6:14 – Prophets telling people "peace, peace" when there is no peace.

2 Timothy 4:3 – *"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."*

This is what Ahab did – he gathered prophets who would tell him what he wanted to hear.

"One sometimes wonders if the church is drifting back to an Ahab mind-set, or, if not hostile toward the candor of the word at least embarrassed by it. I have received church advertisements in my mail. A new church is forming in our area. It is going to feature, among other attractions, a 'non-judgmental atmosphere' to attract me. I know, I mustn't over-interpret. Bu what does that mean?"

Likely that the church means to eschew negativism, refrain from making folks 'feel guilty', or – the ultimate contemporary sin – feel bad about themselves. What will the ministry of the word be like in such a church? Will it ever press home the word of God in its searing honesty? Or must that be sacrificed lest it destroy the non-judgmental ambience? Ahab would love such a place.” – Davis, p.315-316.

How many times in the Bible do we see confrontations as people come up against the Word of God and their own sinfulness or need for change? Such insight is necessary for change to occur. Think of Nathan with David, or Peter with the crowd gathered at Pentecost? If I don't see myself as a sinner, then why do I need a savior?

The insight that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and that we have sin that needs to be confessed and turned from (1 John 1:8-9) is necessary for a person to come to Jesus and live a changed life through Him.

Ahab doesn't respect God or the truth, and it will ultimately cost him his life.

Ahab reluctantly calls for a prophet of God whom he hates, because he always says things that don't fit in with what Ahab wants to hear.

The prophet Micaiah was called and told to go along with the group – and pressured to do so – vs. 13.

When asked by Ahab if he would be successful in war, Micaiah responded with sarcasm and said, “Attack and be victorious for the Lord will give it into the king's hand.”

How do we know it's sarcasm? Because Ahab picked right up on it.

“The sight of the two kings on their thrones, dressed in their royal robes, must have been impressive, but it didn't sway Micaiah. His words in verse 13 were spoken in sarcasm and Ahab knew it. . .” – Wiersbe, p.489

Micaiah then gives the real message from God: Israel will be left without a shepherd. *“Ahab got the message: he would be killed in the battle.” – Wiersbe, p.489*

Micaiah's second vision told how Ahab would be deceived, and so it was clear God didn't lie to Ahab – but gave Ahab a fair warning of what was going to happen.

2. Fulfillment of God's Word – 29 - 40

“If Ahab had put a target on Jehoshaphat's back, he would not have made it easier for the enemy to kill him! If Jehoshaphat had died, then his son would have taken the throne, and Ahab's daughter would have been the Jezebel of Judah!” – Wiersbe, p.489

Ahab heard what was prophesied about him, but he went into battle anyway, and tried to hedge his bets by dressing as a common soldier – vs. 30. That way, Jehoshaphat would be the target of the enemy!

The random flight of a soldier's arrow was in reality not random at all – and struck Ahab in-between the parts of his armor, striking a mortal blow.

The result? Ahab's dead body was brought back to Samaria, where the blood was washed from the chariot and was lapped up by dogs – in fulfillment of Elijah's prophesy of judgment for the killing of Naboth – 1 Kings 21:19.

As we come to the conclusion of 1 Kings, we see:

the good: the king of Judah who followed the Lord – vs.43. In 2 Chronicles, when vast army comes to conquer Judah, he pleads with the Lord for help and says, *"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."* God's response through a prophet Jahaziel: *"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's."*

the bad: Ahaziah, Ahab's son, takes over the reins of the northern kingdom and continues his evil father's ways – vs. 52-53.

Sadly, 1 Kings ends on a dark note – it was "night" in Israel.

Lessons from 1 Kings:

1. **There is only 1 true God.** People then were tempted to worship other gods that they thought they could control and manipulate – but they were false gods. As the people of the northern kingdom found out on Mt. Carmel – there is only one God – and He is to be worshipped and served.
1. **God keeps His word – His covenants.** We see over and over again, that when God says He will do something, He will do it. If David's kingdom would last forever, it would! What that means for us is that the promises made in the New Testament from God like:
 - Hearing our prayers
 - Forgiving our sins
 - Preparing a place for us to live with Him forever

Are all true!

2. **Success can sure lead to failure.** Solomon was the richest man in the world, and the smartest man in the world, but he made a mess out of his life that resulted in a rebellion and a kingdom that was divided.
3. **Trying to invent our own religion leads to destruction.** Jeroboam did this, and "the sins of Jeroboam" are mentioned over twenty times in the bible. Jeroboam tried to make religion to suit his own conveniences.
5. **God's love is longsuffering.** He was patient with many of these kings even though they were wicked. He was patient with Elijah in his discouragement, and He was even patient with Ahab, and his repentance is a prime example. He really doesn't want anyone to perish – 2 Peter 3:11.

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