

# Old Testament History

Lesson #18

1 Kings 21:1-2 Kings 3:17

## Outline

- I. ***The Ministries Of The Prophets (1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 8:15)***
  - A. The prophets and Ahab (1 Kings 17:1-22:40).
    1. Ahab and Jezebel seize Naboth's vineyard (21:1-29).
    2. Micaiah foretells Ahab's death (22:1-40).
  - B. Jehoshaphat of Judah (22:41-50).
  - C. Elijah and Ahaziah of Israel (1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:18).
  - D. Elijah taken up to heaven (2:1-18).
  - E. Elisha and Jehoram of Israel (2:19-8:15).
    1. Elisha blesses and curses (2:19-25).
    2. The war against Moab (3:1-27).

## Notes

### ***1 Kings 21:1-29***

- It is significant that the words describing Ahab's state of mind on returning from Jezreel to Samaria after his unsuccessful negotiation with Naboth for his vineyard are exactly the same as those earlier used to describe the impression made on him by the prophet's message (1 Kings 20:43).
- The summer palace of Jezreel was the favorite retreat of Ahab and Jezebel. It was a beautiful area, but Naboth could not be tempted to part with his ancestral land by the king's offer of either a better vineyard or the equivalent in money. Israel could not be completely corrupt as long as there was noble men like Naboth.
- Ahab manifested childish behavior and complete selfishness on his return to Samaria. Jezebel, the unscrupulous woman, pressured the unprincipled man. Ahab must have known something was up when she asked for his royal signet.
- Naboth was "set on high," as one incriminated before the elders, against whom witnesses would be produced, and upon whom judgment would be pronounced by the people of the city. Naboth's sons were also put to death at this time (cf. 2 Kings 9:26), so that no living heir could lay claim to the land. When word was taken to Jezebel that Naboth was dead, Ahab immediately took possession of the property. Tragically, the scriptures do not say that Ahab was concerned enough to ask how Naboth had died or how the property was suddenly available for royal claim.

- On that very day, Elijah was called by God to confront Ahab once more. Ahab no longer called Elijah “the troubler of Israel” but “my enemy.” Doubtless his guilt weighed so heavily on his own conscience that he knew Elijah was there to condemn him. When Elijah stated that he had sold himself to do evil, he was not commenting on a rash decision, but the unmistakable course of his life.
- Ahab and his house would be cut off like those of the first two dynasties, his spiritual predecessors in idolatry. The divine sentence pointed to terrible slaughter and carnage. Jezebel certainly would not escape either. Ahab reacted strongly to the rebuke by clothing himself in sackcloth and fasting. God sent Elijah to the king again telling him that the threatened punishment would be delayed until the lifetime of his son. However, Jezebel would not be spared.

### ***1 Kings 22:1-47; 2 Chronicles 18:1-34***

- Ahab used 400 false prophets to try to convince Jehoshaphat to move forward with him in an expedition against Ramoth-Gilead. These prophets, although not prophets of Baal, were prophets of Ahab, professedly speaking the word of the Lord. This is clear evidence of the debasement of the worship of God.
- Chronicles says that Ahab “enticed” Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 18:2), while Kings only relates the circumstances that led to the formal alliance between them. As important as Jehoshaphat may have felt the expedition, he knew that he should not go without some explicit approval from God.
- When the 400 prophets gave their unqualified support for the invasion, Jehoshaphat asked if there was a prophet of the Lord to be found in Samaria. It can be strongly inferred that Micaiah had been prophesying evil against Ahab. Furthermore, it is clear that Ahab merely saw prophets as men that he could control. The good or evil in their message was the result of either personal friendship or enmity with the king.
- The symbolic action of Zedekiah and the promise of pushing the Syrians back refers to Deuteronomy 33:17. This shows the interesting mixture of the acknowledgement of God with false prophecy. Micaiah knew that Ahab really did not want a message from God -- he had chosen his own path, and his destruction would come because of his own sin.
- Ahab received his sentence and Zedekiah would understand Micaiah’s prophecy in the day when he hid himself from the enemy in an inner room. Ahab demanded that Micaiah be put in prison on rations until he returned. Micaiah stated that if Ahab returned at all, then the Lord had not spoken through him.

- We are not told what impression the scene made upon Jehoshaphat, but one cannot help but feel that, in spite of his boastfulness, it had a deep impact even upon Ahab. This is easy to see in the request he made of Jehoshaphat, who would go to battle in his royal robes while Ahab disguised himself.
- The disguise did not work. When the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat, they refused to kill him, seeking to kill Ahab instead. A "random" arrow found its mark, inflicting a mortal wound and causing Ahab to be wheeled out of the battle. So that the soldiers would not become discouraged by his death, Ahab had his dying body propped up in his chariot. When it was known that the king was dead, as Ahab had feared and as Micaiah had predicted, the army scattered. True to the prophecy, the dogs licked up his blood (1 Kings 20:42; 21:19; 22:17, 20).

## **2 Chronicles 19:1-20:34**

- Hanani the seer had confronted King Asa half a century earlier, and his son Jehu the seer had already condemned the dynasty of Baasha in Israel, some 35 years before this occasion in 853 B.C. (1 Kings 16:1, 7). Jehu's message was once again a negative one, opposing Jehoshaphat's alliance with Israel.
- Jehoshaphat had to learn in the destruction of his fleet at Ezion-Geber (2 Chronicles 20:37) that his undertakings, however well-planned and apparently safe, would only end in disappointment and failure. Once again he undertook the religious reformation started at the commencement of his reign. He traveled the country from its southern boundary to its northern. His main desire was to bring the people back to God.
- The account given of the work of Jehoshaphat embraces three points: the appointment of judges, the principle underlying their authority, and rules for their office. Jehoshaphat appointed a tribunal of priests, Levites, and the chiefs of clans. He gave them the final decision in all matters concerning religion and worship.
- The Moabites and Ammonites came up against Jehoshaphat and the first response was to invoke the aid of the Lord. A fast was proclaimed throughout Judah -- a day of humiliation for national sins and of prayer in their time of greatest need. Jehoshaphat took his place in the most prominent part of the temple and guided the people in their act of humiliation and earnest prayer.
- The ambushes that the Lord set against the invaders are not identified; but they may have consisted of Edomites, since the men of Ammon and Moab proceeded to turn on the men of Mt. Seir. The result was that they helped to destroy one another, just as had occurred at the triumph of Gideon (Judges 7:22).

- Judah then had the opportunity to take the spoils of the battle. For three days they took spoil, and on the fourth day they gathered in a valley to the northwest of Tekoa where they praised and thanked God.

***1 Kings 22:48-2 Kings 2:14; 2 Chronicles 20:35-37***

- The historical notice is probably intended to explain how Jehoshaphat restarted commercial activities in Ezion-Geber. The Edomite weakness may be attributed to Jehoshaphat's victory over Moab and Ammon. Jehoshaphat's commercial alliance with Ahaziah was denounced by the Lord through his prophet Eliezer (2 Chronicles 20:36-37). Because Ahaziah was evil, God had sent a storm to destroy the fleet before it could sail. Evidently Jehoshaphat was wise enough to refuse a second trading proposal put forward by Ahaziah.
- The reign of Ahaziah lasted a little more than a year. The one great political event of the period is very briefly mentioned, but it was full of disastrous consequences. From the opening of words of 2 Kings we learn that the Moabites, who, since the time of David, had paid tribute, rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.
- Ahaziah fell through a lattice and consulted Baalzebub the god of Ekron. Baal was the common name given by the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Syrians, and Assyrians to their supreme deity. This Baal was the fly god, who was supposed to send or to avert a plague of flies. He was also consulted as an oracle. This, in reality, was a challenge to God, and must be dealt with accordingly. Elijah told the messengers to take back God's message of death to Ahaziah.
- The first reaction of the king was to send troops after Elijah, presumably with the intent of bringing him back to the king. Instantly, at Elijah's bidding, heavenly fire consumed the commander and all his men. When the captain and his 50 men did not return, Ahaziah sent a more arrogant commander with his 50 man squad who met the same judgment. The third commander respectfully asked Elijah for their lives and for the prophet to accompany them back to Samaria. The sentence would not be removed. Ahaziah died and his brother Jehoram took his place.
- The circumstances surrounding the removal of Elijah are as unique as those connected with his first appearance. It had the same suddenness, miraculousness, and symbolic meaning.
- The text clearly shows that the immediate departure of Elijah was expected, and the language also implies that something extraordinary was going to be connected with it. As they proceeded southward toward Bethel, Elijah indicated to Elisha that the Lord wanted him to go all the way to Bethel to visit the school of the prophets there and so he urged Elisha to stay in Gilgal. It would appear from the narrative that Elijah

had told his students that his ministry was nearing a close and that one day soon he would leave them. Elisha would not be dissuaded; he would go with Elijah.

- The two great prophets, master and successor, stood at the banks of the Jordan. Taking his prophet's mantle and rolling it up like a rod, Elijah struck the river. Immediately the waters on one side piled up in a heap, and the waters on the other side ran off toward the Dead Sea.
- Elijah, sensing the imminency of his departure, asked what more he could do for his successor. To the very end he remained concerned for others and for the continuance of God's work. The enormity of the loss of Elijah must have so gripped the humble Elisha that, claiming his position as firstborn, he asked for the firstborn's "double portion." This not to be thought of in the sense of inheritance, but of the granting of power far beyond his own capabilities to meet the responsibilities of the enormous task that lay before him.
- Suddenly, as the two walked and talked together, a fiery chariot swooped between them and took Elijah along in its terrific wind up into heaven. It was over in an instant. Elisha could only cry out in amazed tribute to his departed master. The translated prophet had been a spiritual father to Israel and as such, spiritually, her foremost defense. Once again the Jordan parted, bringing not only complete confirmation of his prophetic office to Elisha, but divine accreditation for him before the eyes of the 50 students who had witnessed the entire event.

### **2 Kings 2:15-25**

- With the removal of Elijah, Elisha started his ministry, the test of its reality being the parting of the Jordan. The next three incidents should be considered as preparatory to his prophetic activity. The first was a public acknowledgement by the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 15:15-18). The second was when he healed the waters, and the third was when the bears killed the youths who mocked him (2 Kings 2:15-24).
- The 50 sons of the prophets instantly recognized the transferral of prophetic prominence to Elisha and accepted his leadership. From this moment, they would be unquestioning, obedient instruments of his will. However, they had to learn this from painful experience. Their insistence of searching the countryside for Elijah was granted. When they were fully satisfied that Elijah was nowhere to be found, they returned to Elisha, doubtless with greater resolve to listen to their new leader.
- The last two miracles immediately established the character of his ministry -- his would be a helping ministry to those in need, but one that would tolerate no disrespect for God and His earthly workers.

- In the case of Jericho, though the city had been rebuilt in the days of Ahab (1 Kings 16:34), it had remained unproductive. Apparently the water still lay under Joshua's curse (cf. Joshua 6:26), so that both the citizens and land suffered. Elisha's miracle removed the judgment, and he wrought the cure through the means supplied by the people of Jericho so that their faith might be strengthened through submission and participation in God's work.
- The very public insult against Elisha was a mocking of Elijah's being received up into heaven, aimed ultimately at God. In a very real way, Elisha's whole prophetic work was in jeopardy; therefore the youths' ridicule had to be dealt with sternly. The sudden arrival of the two bears who mauled 42 young men to death would serve as both an awful sentence on unbelievers and a reminder that blasphemy against God would be met with swift and harsh consequences.

### **2 Kings 3:1-27**

- Mesha, the Moabite king, refused to send the required tribute of wool and rebelled against Israel, and he made his own record of this rebellion. It was found in 1868 at Dibon, in Moab, 20 miles east of the Dead Sea, by F. A. Klein, a German missionary. It is a black basalt stone, 3 feet high, 2 feet wide, 14 inches thick, with an inscription of Mesha. It is known as the Moabite Stone. Thinking that several pieces would be more valuable than one, Arabs, by lighting a fire around it and pouring cold water over it, broke it in pieces. Later the French secured the pieces, and by putting them together, saved the inscription. It is now in the Louvre Museum.
- Jehoram enlisted Jehoshaphat to join with him in the expedition against the Moabites. Jehoshaphat agreed. He probably felt that he had a score to settle with Moab for the previous war (2 Chronicles 20:1-29). The plan of the two kings was to make an invasion of Moab from the south. Mesha refused to be drawn into the wilderness of Edom. Jehoram saw nothing but defeat and doom. Jehoshaphat, despite his shortcomings, was concerned with spiritual matters, and, as on another occasion (1 Kings 22:7), he asked for a true prophet of the Lord.
- As the kings approached Elisha, he addressed Jehoram -- whose war this really was -- with words of strong rebuke. Why had Jehoram come to God's prophet and not to those of Baal, whom Israel's royal house served?
- God would grant them a complete victory. The people were instructed to dig ditches, and then, without the sound of wind or the sight of rain, would the ditches be filled with water. When God filled the ditches, the Israelites quenched their thirst. But when the Moabites saw the water, they thought it was blood because it was turned red by the color of the

soil. They rushed into the camp, intent on spoiling them. They were met by the allies and the Moabites fell back in disarray as far as Kir Hareseth, where they determined to make a final stand.

- As the siege of Kir Hareseth continued, the frenzied Moabite king sacrificed his firstborn son and the heir to the throne so that the anger of his god Chemosh might be appeased and the city delivered. While Moab's god could never deliver the king and the city, the act had the desired effect. Sickened by the spectacle of senseless human sacrifice, the allied kings stopped their siege and returned home.