

1. Review of the life of Israel in the days of the Divided Kingdom:
 - a. Judah (the Southern Kingdom) began its separate life with Rehoboam, son of Solomon, in 931 B.C, and reigned for 17 years.
 - b. Abijah, Rehoboam's son reigned for 3 years.
 - c. Asa, Abijah's son, was a good king, blessed by God with a reign of 41 years.
 - 1) He overthrew idol worship and refurbished the Temple.
 - 2) God gave him a great victory over Ethiopia.
 - 3) At the end of his life he made a political alliance with Ben-Hadad of Syria, which earned him a stern rebuke from God's prophet.
 - d. Asa passed the throne to Jehoshaphat (in today's reading).
 - e. The Northern Kingdom was chaotic - it has already moved through 4 dynasties in our readings.
 - 1) The House of Jeroboam had been overthrown (by murdering Jeroboam's son) by the house of Baasha.
 - 2) Baasha's house was overthrown by Zimri.
 - 3) Zimri lasted a week before being overthrown by the dynasty of Omri.
 - 4) Ahaziah followed Ahab as the 8th king (not counting Tibni who contended against Omri). Israel had 8 kings while Judah had only 4 in the same time frame.
 - f. The one main prophet (we have seen several "men of God") of this time so far is Elijah.
 - 1) His ministry was in the Northern Kingdom.
 - 2) It has been primarily directed against wicked King Ahab, and his even more wicked wife, Jezebel.
 - g. Through this entire period, Israel had no good kings and Judah had only one, Asa.
2. God is sovereign, and even Ahab could not avoid judgment in the end. The story of his death is simple and unadorned.
3. Jehoshaphat succeeded his father Asa and began by doing right in the eyes of the Lord.
4. Before Ahab died, he and Jehoshaphat negotiated a treaty of peace to bring an end to the perpetual wars between Israel and Judah, and formed an alliance against Syria, to take back the city of Ramoth-Gilead.
 - a. Ahab's "prophets for hire" all say 'go ahead'.
 - b. Jehoshaphat wants to hear from God, and so we meet God's prophet Micaiah.
 - 1) Ahab does not want to hear what Micaiah has to say even though he knows it is true.
 - 2) Ahab, though disguised, is killed by a Syrian bowman, just as Micaiah had predicted.
 - 3) "God always watches over His Word to perform it...the sovereign rule of God over His Word and His world is once again vindicated."
5. Ahab's death:
 - a. God used the false prophets and the lying spirits to their evil work to accomplish His righteous ends...he had given Ahab up (just as Romans 1 teaches).
 - b. The 'gods' of Ahab were not 'nothings' - they were demonic forces - but God is sovereign even over them.
 - c. Even though Elijah had felt alone, there were other prophets of God and they were beginning to proliferate:
 - 1) Samuel, Nathan and Gad were in the time of David the king.

- 2) Ahijah foretold the division of the kingdom, and Shemaiah was active in Judah at the same time.
- 3) There have been anonymous 'men of God'.
- 4) Elijah and Elisha are the dominant prophets of this period - their combined ministries last for the better part of a century.
- 5) Micaiah foretold Ahab's death.
- 6) Jehu prophesied in the reign of Jehoshaphat, and also prophesied the end of Baasha's family.
- 7) Isaiah, Jonah and others would be on the scene in a few more years.

6. The role of these prophets was to convey the Word of the Lord which came to them to the people and the rulers

- a. The fulfillment of their prophecies authorized their message.
- b. The words were sometimes demonstrated with signs.
- c. Their statements are remarkably consistent:
 - 1) Do not forsake the true God and worship idols.
 - 2) Judgment will come if you do.
 - 3) God would have mercy in preserving the faithful.
 - 4) They called for repentance.

7. The cost to the prophet:

- a. He was often shunned.
- b. His message was rejected.
- c. Elijah had a price on his head.
- d. Some were publicly rebuked, seized or imprisoned

8. Jehoshaphat initiated a nationwide revival in Bible study (2 Chronicles 19).

- a. The teachers were the leaders of the country - princes, rulers, priests and Levites.
- b. The result was peace, prosperity, revival in building and business, a large standing army.

9. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab brought only disaster - it was wrong and God did not bless it. But on the whole, God was pleased with King Jehoshaphat and God blessed Him.

1. Elijah the Tishbite's 'departure':
 - a. One of only 2 people in the Bible who did not experience physical death - (Enoch was the other (Genesis 5)
 - 1) God chose to honor 2 men of extraordinary holiness, faith and courage.

 - 2) These 2 men are the 'first fruits' of many other believers who will be 'translated' to heaven and not see death when Christ returns.
2. Many believe that Enoch and Elijah are the 2 witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation.
3. As Elijah is leaving, Elisha asks for a double portion of his blessing. The Bible records 10 miracles performed by Elisha, 5 performed by Elijah.
4. Ahab, in Israel, was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who was not a good king. He will be followed by his son, Jehoram, the last of the house of Omri. Jehoshaphat, in Judah, was succeeded by Jehoram and Ahaziah, so there were kings in both kingdoms with the same names at about the same time and it can get very confusing. One thing is the same - they were all bad!
5. King Ahaziah of Israel sends messengers to inquire of Beel-Zebub (which means 'Lord of the Flies') to see whether or not he will recover from injuries sustained in a fall. They are intercepted by Elijah, who says he will not recover because of his idolatrous inquiry.
 - a. Ahaziah sends 3 groups of soldiers to capture Elijah, and he calls for fire from heaven to consume the first 2 groups.
 - b. In the same vein, Elisha later calls for bears to deal with his tormentors.
 - c. How to we explain this harshness?
 - 1) They were not reacting to personal slights, but to the challenge directed at the God of Israel.

 - 2) However, the New Testament model is different and we are to follow it (1 Peter Chapter 2): "Who, when He (Jesus) was reviled, reviled not again...but kept on trusting Himself to the one who judges righteously."
6. The companies (or the schools) of the prophets at 3 different locations:
 - a. We only find them operating in the Northern Kingdom, not in Judah.
 - b. They were not learning 'how' to prophesy - that was a gift from God.
 - c. They were in place to assist the lead prophet in his duties given to him by God.
7. The miracle of sweetening the bitter water of the Spring of Jericho:
 - a. Elisha replicated a miracle done by Moses in the wilderness - great accrediting factor.
 - b. He had also crossed the Jordan River on dry ground - like Moses at the Red Sea and Elijah at the Jordan River - again, it showed that he was man worth following.

1. Elisha means “God is salvation”. And he was a “power prophet” like Elijah, his mentor.
2. Ahaziah of Israel had no children, so he was succeeded by his brother Jehoram (or Joram), the last of the descendants of Omri to sit on the throne. Jehoshaphat was still King of Judah when Joram became King of Israel.
3. Joram of Israel did get rid of Baal and acknowledge Jehovah to be the Lord God of Israel, but he did not renounce the sins of Jeroboam.
4. The prophet Elisha’s miracles:
 - a. Water in the desert, the widow’s oil, the birth and resurrection of the Shunammite’s son, the cleansing of the food, the feeding of 100 men with 20 loaves and the healing of Naaman, the Syrian leper
 - b. They bear strong similarities to the miracles of Moses before him, and Jesus after him.
 - 1) The miracle of the provision of water is a reminder of Moses - and Elisha emphasizes that this is an easy thing for God to do.
 - 2) The other miracles point forward to a greater One who is coming - the Lord Jesus Christ:
 - a) Elisha’s oil and Jesus’ wine
 - b) The Shunammite’s son and the son of the widow of Nain
 - c) The feeding of the 100 men and the feeding of the 5000
 - d) The healing of the Syrian leper and Jesus’ healing of lepers and His willingness to use His power for those who were not Israelites
 - e) Difference: Elisha had to labor in prayer - Jesus had only to speak a word.
 - f. Both Elisha and Jesus had hearts of compassion. And they both ministered to the needs of women, unusual in the ancient world.
5. The linkage between Elisha’s prophetic activity and music: Godly music soothes our minds and allows us to put away our distractions and focus on God.
6. The story of Naaman:
 - a. The faithful witness of the Israelite slave girl - she offered mercy and love to her captor.
 - b. The character study of Naaman - God had to break his pride before he could receive the great gift that God wanted to give him.
 - c. Elisha’s refusal of Naaman’s gift - you cannot pay God for His merciful gifts.
 - d. Naaman was not healed until he had dipped in the dirty Jordan River all 7 times - God demands complete obedience.
 - e. Gehazi gave in to greed and deception, and paid a terrible price.
7. The political situation of the time:
 - a. The alliance between Judah and Israel forged in Ahab’s time had allowed for Israel to have a certain amount of influence and stature among the nations, and for Moab to be in subservience to Judah. Syria was still a major player, even though the nation had been soundly defeated twice in Ahab’s lifetime. Israel was still afraid of Syria.
 - b. “Wars and rumors of wars; would be a good description of life in the divided kingdom.

1. 1 Kings 6-8:
 - a. 2 more 'Elishan' miracles
 - b. The ongoing battle for supremacy between Israel and Syria
 - c. The love-hate relationship that the kings of both Israel and Judah have with Elisha

2. The axhead story:
 - a. A small thing - the head of a borrowed ax falls into the river.
 - b. Elisha was a man whose heart was moved by the needs of ordinary people.
 - c. The God of Elisha cares as much about the little problems of ordinary people as He does about the big problems of kings and nations, or else He would not have made the axhead float!

3. The story of the Syrian border raids:
 - a. Ben-Hadad sends a raiding party to capture Elisha in Dothan, who is the source of the warnings about their raids into Israel.
 - b. Gehazi is terrified when he sees the Syrian army surrounding the house.
 - c. Elisha prays and Gehazi is able to see, as Elisha does, the "other" army surrounding the Syrians and the hills full of "chariots of fire".
 - d. How do we define "reality"?
 - 1) Empirical View: If I can experience it with my 5 senses, it is real.
 - 2) The Christian View: The spiritual world is a whole lot bigger than our 5 senses can experience. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."
 - 3) The Transfiguration experience 'pulls back the veil' and shows us the bigger reality also.
 - e. Elisha is so unafraid he leads his blind enemies by the hand to the palace of Israel's King, who feasts and releases them, and the border raids stop for a time.
 - f. The kings of both Judah and Israel never quite come to the place where they fully trust or obey Elisha; even after all he has done for them.

4. The remarkable patience and faithfulness of God:
 - a. He is still willing to rescue His chosen people (faithless and idolatrous) from disaster and ruin.
 - b. He uses the Syrians to chastise them, but puts off final judgment.
 - c. He is "the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands (of generations) and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." (Exodus 34: 6&7)

5. The lepers whose message of salvation broke the siege of Samaria are "typical" of the average Christian - having good news and not sharing it is an accusation of fearful consequence.

6. Elisha was a very human man. He maintained his friendship throughout the years with the Shunammite woman and her family. He cared about the worker who lost the borrowed axhead. He moved back and forth from the ordinary to the palace of the king. God cares about the big and the little things, too.

1. Review of the Dynasties of the northern Kingdom:

The dynasty of Jeroboam; overthrown by Baasha; his son was overthrown by Zimri, who lasted a week and was overthrown by Omri; his son Ahab reigned for many years; Omri's dynasty lasted until Elisha had Jehu, an army commander, anointed as Israel's king; Jehu brought God's final judgment upon the house of Omri.

2. Elisha anointed and commissioned Jehu in Ramoth Gilead. To carry out his commission, he rode "furiously" all the way to Jezreel to meet King Joram (who knew nothing of all this). Judah's king Ahaziah was also there. They met in the vineyard of Naboth (which Joram's father Ahab had taken by murder). Jehu shoots and kills Joram with an arrow, and then Jehu's archers chase and kill King Ahaziah of Judah.

3. Then Jehu goes to fulfill the second part of this commission - the death of Jezebel. Her servants push her out the window and dogs devour her body - a fulfillment of prophecy.

4. Jehu secured his throne by beheading all members of Ahab's family.

5. In Hosea 1:4, Jehu is condemned by God for the violence he used in carrying out his commission. His violence brings on revenge from Judah and its friends. He ends up making an alliance with Assyria to help him against Judah, and that makes him subservient to the King of Assyria, to whom he must pay tribute. There is an engraving of him doing just that on the Black Obelisk, an archaeological relic.