

WEEK 39.

1 Kings, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Obadiah, Psalms (Jehosaphat, Ahab, and the Prophet Elijah)

Sunday (2 Chronicles 18–23)

Jehoshaphat Allies with Ahab

18:1 Jehoshaphat was very wealthy and greatly respected. He made an alliance by marriage with Ahab, 18:2 and after several years went down to visit Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle to honor Jehoshaphat and those who came with him. He persuaded him to join in an attack against Ramoth Gilead. 18:3 King Ahab of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to attack Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I will support you; my army is at your disposal and will support you in battle." 18:4 Then Jehoshaphat added, "First seek an oracle from the Lord." 18:5 So the king of Israel assembled 400 prophets and asked them, "Should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?" They said, "Attack! God will hand it over to the king." 18:6 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord still here, that we may ask him?" 18:7 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can seek the Lord's will. But I despise him because he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but always disaster. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. Jehoshaphat said, "The king should not say such things!" 18:8 The king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Quickly bring Micaiah son of Imlah."

18:9 Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their respective thrones, dressed in their royal robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them. 18:10 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made iron horns and said, "This is what the Lord says, 'With these you will gore Syria until they are destroyed!'" 18:11 All the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, "Attack Ramoth Gilead! You will succeed; the Lord will hand it over to the king!" 18:12 Now the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the prophets are in complete agreement that the king will succeed. Your words must agree with theirs; you must predict success!" 18:13 But Micaiah said, "As certainly as the Lord lives, I will say what my God tells me to say!"

18:14 Micaiah came before the king and the king asked him, "Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?" He answered him, "Attack! You will succeed; they will be handed over to you." 18:15 The king said to him, "How many times must I make you solemnly promise in the name of the Lord to tell me only the truth?" 18:16 Micaiah replied, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the Lord said, 'They have no master. They should go home in peace.'" 18:17 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster?"

18:18 Micaiah said, "That being the case, hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left. 18:19 The Lord said, 'Who will deceive King Ahab of Israel, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?' One said this and another that. 18:20 Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the Lord. He said, 'I will deceive him.' The Lord asked him, 'How?' 18:21 He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' The Lord said, 'Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.' 18:22 So now, look, the Lord has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the Lord has decreed disaster for you." 18:23 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah approached, hit Micaiah on the jaw, and said, "Which way did the Lord's spirit go when he went from me to speak to you?" 18:24 Micaiah replied, "Look, you will see in the day when you go into an inner room to hide." 18:25 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the city official and Joash the king's son. 18:26 Say, 'This is what the king says: "Put this man in prison. Give him only a little bread and water until I return safely.'" 18:27 Micaiah said, "If you really do return safely, then the Lord has not spoken through me!" Then he added, "Take note, all you people."

18:28 The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah attacked Ramoth Gilead. 18:29 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and then enter the battle; but you wear your royal attire." So the king of Israel disguised himself and they entered the battle. 18:30 Now the king of Syria had ordered his chariot commanders, "Do not fight common soldiers or high ranking officers; fight only the king of Israel!" 18:31 When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "He must be the king of Israel!" So they turned and attacked him, but Jehoshaphat cried out. The Lord helped him; God lured them away from him. 18:32 When the chariot commanders realized he was not the king of Israel, they turned away from him. 18:33 Now an archer shot an arrow at random and it struck the king of Israel between the plates of his armor. The king ordered his charioteer, "Turn around and take me from the battle line, for I am wounded." 18:34 While the battle raged throughout the day, the king stood propped up in his chariot opposite the Syrians. He died in the evening as the sun was setting.

19:1 When King Jehoshaphat of Judah returned home safely to Jerusalem, 19:2 the prophet Jehu son of Hanani confronted him; he said to King Jehoshaphat, "Is it right to help the wicked and be an ally of those who oppose the Lord? Because you have done this the Lord is angry with you! 19:3 Nevertheless you have done some good things; you removed the Asherah poles from the land and you were determined to follow the Lord."

Jehoshaphat Appoints Judges

19:4 Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem. He went out among the people from Beer Sheba to the hill country of Ephraim and encouraged them to follow the Lord God of their ancestors. 19:5 He appointed judges throughout the land and in each of the fortified cities of Judah. 19:6 He told the judges, "Be careful what you do, for you are not judging for men, but for the Lord, who will be with you when you make judicial decisions. 19:7 Respect the Lord and make careful decisions, for the Lord our God disapproves of injustice, partiality, and bribery."

19:8 In Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed some Levites, priests, and Israelite family leaders to judge on behalf of the Lord and to settle disputes among the residents of Jerusalem. 19:9 He commanded them: "Carry out your duties with respect for the Lord, with honesty, and with pure motives. 19:10 Whenever your countrymen who live in the cities bring a case before you (whether it involves a violent crime or other matters related to the law, commandments, rules, and regulations), warn them that they must not sin against the Lord. If you fail to do so, God will be angry with you and your colleagues; but if you obey, you will be free of guilt. 19:11 You will report to Amariah the chief priest in all matters pertaining to the Lord's law, and to Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the family of Judah, in all matters pertaining to the king. The Levites will serve as officials before you. Confidently carry out your duties! May the Lord be with those who do well!"

The Lord Gives Jehoshaphat Military Success

20:1 Later the Moabites and Ammonites, along with some of the Meunites, attacked Jehoshaphat. 20:2 Messengers arrived and reported to Jehoshaphat, "A huge army is attacking you from the other side of the Dead Sea, from the direction of Edom. Look, they are in Hazezon Tamar (that is, En Gedi)." 20:3 Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he decided to seek the Lord's advice. He decreed that all Judah should observe a fast. 20:4 The people of Judah assembled to ask for the Lord's help; they came from all the cities of Judah to ask for the Lord's help.

20:5 Jehoshaphat stood before the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the Lord's temple, in front of the new courtyard. 20:6 He prayed: "O Lord God of our ancestors, you are the God who lives in heaven and rules over all the kingdoms of the nations. You possess strength and power; no one can stand against you. 20:7 Our God, you drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and gave it as a permanent possession to the descendants of your friend Abraham. 20:8 They settled down in it and built in it a temple to honor you, saying, 20:9 'If disaster comes on us in the form of military attack, judgment, plague, or famine, we will stand in front of this temple before you, for you are present in this temple. We will cry out to you for help in our distress, so that you will hear and deliver us.' 20:10 Now the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir are coming! When Israel came from the land of Egypt, you did not allow them to invade these lands. They bypassed them and did not destroy them. 20:11 Look how they are repaying us! They come to drive us out of our allotted land which you assigned to us! 20:12 Our God, will you not judge them? For we are powerless against this huge army that attacks us! We don't know what we should do; we look to you for help."

20:13 All the men of Judah were standing before the Lord, along with their infants, wives, and children. 20:14 Then in the midst of the assembly, the Lord's Spirit came upon Jachaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph. 20:15 He said: "Pay attention, all you people of Judah, residents of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Don't be afraid and don't panic because of this huge army! For the battle is not yours, but God's. 20:16 Tomorrow march down against them as they come up the Ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the ravine in front of the Desert of Jeruel. 20:17 You will not fight in this battle. Take your positions,

stand, and watch the Lord deliver you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid and don't panic! Tomorrow march out toward them; the Lord is with you!"

20:18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face toward the ground, and all the people of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord and worshiped him. 20:19 Then some Levites, from the Kohathites and Korahites, got up and loudly praised the Lord God of Israel.

20:20 Early the next morning they marched out to the Desert of Tekoa. When they were ready to march, Jehoshaphat stood up and said: "Listen to me, you people of Judah and residents of Jerusalem! Trust in the Lord your God and you will be safe! Trust in the message of his prophets and you will win." 20:21 He met with the people and appointed musicians to play before the Lord and praise his majestic splendor. As they marched ahead of the warriors they said: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his loyal love endures."

20:22 When they began to shout and praise, the Lord suddenly attacked the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. 20:23 The Ammonites and Moabites attacked the men from Mount Seir and annihilated them. When they had finished off the men of Seir, they attacked and destroyed one another. 20:24 When the men of Judah arrived at the observation post overlooking the desert and looked at the huge army, they saw dead bodies on the ground; there were no survivors! 20:25 Jehoshaphat and his men went to gather the plunder; they found a huge amount of supplies, clothing and valuable items. They carried away everything they could. There was so much plunder, it took them three days to haul it off.

20:26 On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, where they praised the Lord. So that place is called the Valley of Berachah to this very day. 20:27 Then all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem with Jehoshaphat leading them; the Lord had given them reason to rejoice over their enemies. 20:28 They entered Jerusalem to the sound of stringed instruments and trumpets and proceeded to the temple of the Lord. 20:29 All the kingdoms of the surrounding lands were afraid of God when they heard how the Lord had fought against Israel's enemies. 20:30 Jehoshaphat's kingdom enjoyed peace; his God made him secure on every side.

Jehoshaphat's Reign Ends

20:31 Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. 20:32 He followed in his father Asa's footsteps and was careful to do what the Lord approved. 20:33 However, the high places were not eliminated; the people were still not devoted to the God of their ancestors.

20:34 The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from start to finish, are recorded in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani which are included in Scroll of the Kings of Israel.

20:35 Later King Jehoshaphat of Judah made an alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel, who did evil. 20:36 They agreed to make large seagoing merchant ships; they built the ships in Ezion Geber. 20:37 Eliezer son of Dodavahu from Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, "Because you made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will shatter what you have made." The ships were wrecked and unable to go to sea.

21:1 Jehoshaphat passed away and was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. His son Jehoram replaced him as king.

Jehoram's Reign

21:2 His brothers, Jehoshaphat's sons, were Azariah, Jeziel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael, and Shephatiah. All of these were sons of King Jehoshaphat of Israel. 21:3 Their father gave them many presents, including silver, gold, and other precious items, along with fortified cities in Judah. But he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn.

21:4 Jehoram took control of his father's kingdom and became powerful. Then he killed all his brothers, as well as some of the officials of Israel. 21:5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king and he reigned for eight years in Jerusalem. 21:6 He followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, for he married Ahab's daughter. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. 21:7 But the Lord was unwilling to destroy David's dynasty because of the promise he had made to give David a perpetual dynasty.

21:8 During Jehoram's reign Edom freed themselves from Judah's control and set up their own king. 21:9 Jehoram crossed over to Zair with his officers and all his chariots. The Edomites, who had surrounded him, attacked at night and defeated him and his chariot officers. 21:10 So Edom has remained free from Judah's control to this very day. At that same time Libnah also rebelled and freed themselves from Judah's control because Jehoram rejected the Lord God of his ancestors. 21:11 He also built high places on the hills of Judah; he encouraged the residents of Jerusalem to be unfaithful to the Lord and led Judah away from the Lord.

21:12 Jehoram received this letter from Elijah the prophet: "This is what the Lord God of your ancestor David says: 'You have not followed in the footsteps of your father Jehoshaphat and of King Asa of Judah, 21:13 but have instead followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel. You encouraged the people of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem to be unfaithful to the Lord, just as the family of Ahab does in Israel. You also killed your brothers, members of your father's family, who were better than you. 21:14 So look, the Lord is about to severely afflict your people, your sons, your wives, and all you own. 21:15 And you will get a serious, chronic intestinal disease which will cause your intestines to come out.'"

21:16 The Lord stirred up against Jehoram the Philistines and the Arabs who lived beside the Cushites. 21:17 They attacked Judah and swept through it. They carried off everything they found in the royal palace, including his sons and wives. None of his sons was left, except for his youngest, Ahaziah. 21:18

After all this happened, the Lord afflicted him with an incurable intestinal disease. 21:19 After about two years his intestines came out because of the disease, so that he died a very painful death. His people did not make a bonfire to honor him, as they had done for his ancestors.

21:20 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. No one regretted his death; he was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal tombs.

Ahaziah's Reign

22:1 The residents of Jerusalem made his youngest son Ahaziah king in his place, for the raiding party that invaded the city with the Arabs had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram became king of Judah. 22:2 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king and he reigned for one year in Jerusalem. His mother was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. 22:3 He followed in the footsteps of Ahab's dynasty, for his mother gave him evil advice. 22:4 He did evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab's dynasty because, after his father's death, they gave him advice that led to his destruction. 22:5 He followed their advice and joined Ahab's son King Joram of Israel in a battle against King Hazael of Syria at Ramoth Gilead in which the Syrians defeated Joram. 22:6 Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he received from the Syrians in Ramah when he fought against King Hazael of Syria. Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah went down to visit Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he had been wounded.

22:7 God brought about Ahaziah's downfall through his visit to Joram. When Ahaziah arrived, he went out with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had commissioned to wipe out Ahab's family. 22:8 While Jehu was dishing out punishment to Ahab's family, he discovered the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives who were serving Ahaziah and killed them. 22:9 He looked for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria. They brought him to Jehu and then executed him. They did give him a burial, for they reasoned, "He is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with his whole heart." There was no one in Ahaziah's family strong enough to rule in his place.

Athaliah is Eliminated

22:10 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she was determined to destroy the entire royal line of Judah. 22:11 So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's son Joash and sneaked him away from the rest of the royal descendants who were to be executed. She hid him and his nurse in the room where the bed covers were stored. So Jehoshabeath the daughter of King Jehoram, wife of Jehoiada the priest and sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah so she could not execute him. 22:12 He remained in hiding in God's temple for six years, while Athaliah was ruling over the land.

23:1 In the seventh year Jehoiada made a bold move. He made a pact with the officers of the units of hundreds: Azariah son of Jehoram, Ishmael son of Jehochanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of

Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zikri. 23:2 They traveled throughout Judah and assembled the Levites from all the cities of Judah, as well as the Israelite family leaders.

They came to Jerusalem, 23:3 and the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, "The king's son will rule, just as the Lord promised David's descendants. 23:4 This is what you must do. One third of you priests and Levites who are on duty during the Sabbath will guard the doors. 23:5 Another third of you will be stationed at the royal palace and still another third at the Foundation Gate. All the others will stand in the courtyards of the Lord's temple. 23:6 No one must enter the Lord's temple except the priests and Levites who are on duty. They may enter because they are ceremonially pure. All the others should carry out their assigned service to the Lord. 23:7 The Levites must surround the king. Each of you must hold his weapon in his hand. Whoever tries to enter the temple must be killed. You must accompany the king wherever he goes."

23:8 The Levites and all the men of Judah did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each of them took his men, those who were on duty during the Sabbath as well as those who were off duty on the Sabbath. Jehoiada the priest did not release his divisions from their duties. 23:9 Jehoiada the priest gave to the officers of the units of hundreds King David's spears and shields that were kept in God's temple. 23:10 He placed the men at their posts, each holding his weapon in his hand. They lined up from the south side of the temple to the north side and stood near the altar and the temple, surrounding the king. 23:11 Jehoiada and his sons led out the king's son and placed on him the crown and the royal insignia. They proclaimed him king and poured olive oil on his head. They declared, "Long live the king!"

23:12 When Athaliah heard the royal guard shouting and praising the king, she joined the crowd at the Lord's temple. 23:13 Then she saw the king standing by his pillar at the entrance. The officers and trumpeters stood beside the king and all the people of the land were celebrating and blowing trumpets, and the musicians with various instruments were leading the celebration. Athaliah tore her clothes and yelled, "Treason! Treason!" 23:14 Jehoiada the priest sent out the officers of the units of hundreds, who were in charge of the army, and ordered them, "Bring her outside the temple to the guards. Put the sword to anyone who follows her." The priest gave this order because he had decided she should not be executed in the Lord's temple. 23:15 They seized her and took her into the precincts of the royal palace through the horses' entrance. There they executed her.

23:16 Jehoiada then drew up a covenant stipulating that he, all the people, and the king should be loyal to the Lord. 23:17 All the people went and demolished the temple of Baal. They smashed its altars and idols. They killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. 23:18 Jehoiada then assigned the duties of the Lord's temple to the priests, the Levites whom David had assigned to the Lord's temple. They were responsible for offering burnt sacrifices to the Lord with joy and music, according to the law of Moses and the edict of David. 23:19 He posted guards at the gates of the Lord's temple, so no one who was ceremonially unclean in any way could enter. 23:20 He summoned the officers of the units of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people, and all the people of land, and he then led the king down from the Lord's temple. They entered the royal palace through the Upper Gate and seated the king on

the royal throne. 23:21 All the people of the land celebrated, for the city had rest now that they had killed Athaliah.

PRAYER

Lord, Your pattern is consistent, when mankind chooses to follow You they are blessed and when they rebel you withdraw Your blessings and allow the natural fallen state of evil to have its way. May I not forget that it is You-alone Who holds-back the evil from my doorstep.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Jehoshaphat, as king of Judah, followed the Lord and even removed the high places, he sent priests throughout the kingdom to teach about the worship of the Lord God, and God blessed him with victory in battle, great wealth, and respect.

Ahab, as king of Israel, was not faithful to the Lord God and surrounded himself with 400 false prophets and had an adversarial relationship with the only remaining prophet of God in Israel, Micaiah.

Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to join him in a battle and Jehoshaphat agreed, but requested an oracle from God. Ahab consulted his false prophets but Jehoshaphat asked for a true prophet.

Ahab complained that Micaiah always prophesied trouble but Jehoshaphat insisted. Micaiah arrived and after toying with Ahab a bit prophesied his death in battle.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat ignored him and went ahead, while the Lord God protected Jehoshaphat when he cried-out (because Jehoshaphat had been faithful as king), but Ahab was killed as was prophesied.

When Jehoshaphat returned home he was confronted with the Lord God's displeasure through the prophet Jehu who challenged him "Is it right to help the wicked and be an ally of those who oppose the Lord?"

Jehoshaphat continued to teach the people to serve the Lord and he appointed judges, separating decisions related to worship and obedience of the Lord God from matters related to the governance of the kingdom. "You will report to Amariah the chief priest in all matters pertaining to the Lord's law, and to Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the family of Judah, in all matters pertaining to the king."

Judah was threatened with attack and Jehoshaphat appealed to the Lord who told him not to fear, that He would fight for him. Jehoshaphat trusted the Lord and gathered the people to tell them to come and see what the Lord would do. As they approached the battle they sang praises to the Lord and He caused the enemy to fight one-another until they were all dead.

The people took three days to gather the plunder and they praised and worshiped the Lord.

Late in his reign Jehoshaphat of Judah made an alliance with the evil King Ahaziah of Israel to build ships. The Lord God sent his prophet Eliezer to inform Jehoshaphat that he had once-again allied himself with an evil leader and then God caused the ships to be destroyed.

Jehoram was an evil king who killed all of his brothers, and many of his father's advisers, and consolidated power. He returned to the ways of previous evil kings.

Elijah prophesied his downfall, the destruction of his family, and great harm to Judah. When he died he was not mourned and was not buried in the royal tombs.

Ahaziah was rebellious like his father and was killed by Jehu while he visited Joram of Israel who had been injured. Jehu was in the process of destroying Ahab's entire family.

Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah tried to murder his family line but one child was hidden from her. Then Jehoiada, the priest, coordinated with the military leaders and the Levites to protect the child while they arranged to crown him. When Athaliah heard she rushed to challenge him and was executed.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Jehoshaphat made a wise choice to obey the Lord God, and wiser still to teach the people to do the same. The pattern of blessed loyalty to the Lord God versus troubles for rebellion continued for the kings and the people of Israel and Judah.

DISCUSS

Why would Jehoshaphat have twice made alliances with the evil kings of Israel when it was clear that the Lord God disapproved? Why would the kings, sons of blessed kings, choose the path of rebellion and trouble rather than that of faithfulness and blessing?

REFLECT

God's purpose in blessing is always clear, always purposeful, and never random. The prophets had a tough time of things, sometimes kings and other leaders listened, and sometimes they were ignored – and even killed – in their service to the Lord.

SHARE

When have you experienced or observed an otherwise faithful leader choosing to ally with other leaders whose faithfulness to the Lord is questionable? When have you experienced or observed someone speaking-up for the truth of God, only to be ignored, and/or punished by those who claimed to be followers of Christ?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a source of teaching or other association where your walk with the Lord may be compromised either by bad teaching or by your contribution to the cause of someone (or some organization) not aligned with the will of God. Also ask Him to reveal to you someone who is being faithful to the Lord and who faces challenges as a result.

ACT

Today I will seek one who meets the Biblical qualifications of an “elder” and agree to pray and search the Word and to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as I discern and repent of any alliance or association which is objectionable to Him. I will diligently pray for, and as is appropriate, otherwise assist the one to whom the Lord God directs my attention. They may be domestic or foreign missionaries, leaders or members in a local fellowship, or activists within the larger community of faith.

Be Specific _____

Monday (1 Kings 17)

Elijah Visits a Widow in Sidonian Territory

17:1 Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As certainly as the Lord God of Israel lives (whom I serve), there will be no dew or rain in the years ahead unless I give the command.” 17:2 The Lord told him: 17:3 “Leave here and travel eastward. Hide out in the Kerith Valley near the Jordan. 17:4 Drink from the stream; I have already told the ravens to bring you food there.” 17:5 So he did as the Lord told him; he went and lived in the Kerith Valley near the Jordan. 17:6 The ravens would bring him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he would drink from the stream.

17:7 After a while, the stream dried up because there had been no rain in the land. 17:8 The Lord told him, 17:9 “Get up, go to Zarephath in Sidonian territory, and live there. I have already told a widow who lives there to provide for you.” 17:10 So he got up and went to Zarephath. When he went through the city gate, there was a widow gathering wood. He called out to her, “Please give me a cup of water, so I can take a drink.” 17:11 As she went to get it, he called out to her, “Please bring me a piece of bread.” 17:12 She said, “As certainly as the Lord your God lives, I have no food, except for a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. Right now I am gathering a couple of sticks for a fire. Then I’m going home to make one final meal for my son and myself. After we have eaten that, we will die of starvation.” 17:13 Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go and do as you planned. But first make a small cake for me and bring it to me; then make something for yourself and your son. 17:14 For this is what the Lord God of Israel says, “The jar of flour will not be empty and the jug of oil will not run out until the day the Lord makes it rain on the surface of the ground.” 17:15 She went and did as Elijah told her; there was always

enough food for Elijah and for her and her family. 17:16 The jar of flour was never empty and the jug of oil never ran out, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

17:17 After this the son of the woman who owned the house got sick. His illness was so severe he could no longer breathe. 17:18 She asked Elijah, "Why, prophet, have you come to me to confront me with my sin and kill my son?" 17:19 He said to her, "Hand me your son." He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him down on his bed. 17:20 Then he called out to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, are you also bringing disaster on this widow I am staying with by killing her son?" 17:21 He stretched out over the boy three times and called out to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, please let this boy's breath return to him." 17:22 The Lord answered Elijah's prayer; the boy's breath returned to him and he lived. 17:23 Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upper room to the house, and handed him to his mother. Elijah then said, "See, your son is alive!" 17:24 The woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a prophet and that the Lord really does speak through you."

PRAYER

Lord, when You call you empower. May I be alert to where You are moving so that I may be a useful instrument.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Elijah was given a tough task early in the record of his ministry as a prophet – to tell a king that disaster was to come upon the land due to their sin – which flowed in part from his poor leadership.

The Lord provided for his immediate needs then relocated him and used a widow as His instrument of miraculous provision.

Elijah appeared to have a weakness of faith as the Lord saw fit to challenge him via the mortal illness of her son. He prayerfully questioned the Lord's motives then asked for healing, which the Lord granted.

His faith, and his credentials as a prophet in the eyes of the widow, were enhanced as a result.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Give the past violence of kings toward prophets one would anticipate some fear as Elijah brought bad news.

DISCUSS

Why would Elijah have been so upset at God for allowing, or causing, the illness of the widow's son?

REFLECT

Witnessing the healing of her son via Elijah affirmed his credentials with her.

SHARE

When have you doubted someone in Christian leadership then had their 'credentials' affirmed because the Lord God used them as His instrument in an obvious way?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place when you, like Elijah, may harbor confusion as to the Lord's action – or inaction.

ACT

Today I will confess, repent, seek and receive forgiveness from the Lord for doubting His perfect wisdom. I will then give Him praise.

Be Specific _____

Tuesday (1 Kings 18)

Elijah Meets the King's Servant

18:1 Some time later, in the third year of the famine, the Lord told Elijah, "Go, make an appearance before Ahab, so I may send rain on the surface of the ground." 18:2 So Elijah went to make an appearance before Ahab.

Now the famine was severe in Samaria. 18:3 So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who supervised the palace. (Now Obadiah was a very loyal follower of the Lord. 18:4 When Jezebel was killing the Lord's prophets, Obadiah took one hundred prophets and hid them in two caves in two groups of fifty. He also brought them food and water.) 18:5 Ahab told Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grazing areas so we can keep the horses and mules alive and not have to kill some of the animals." 18:6 They divided up the land between them; Ahab went one way and Obadiah went the other.

18:7 As Obadiah was traveling along, Elijah met him. When he recognized him, he fell facedown to the ground and said, "Is it really you, my master, Elijah?" 18:8 He replied, "Yes, go and say to your master, 'Elijah is back.'" 18:9 Obadiah said, "What sin have I committed that you are ready to hand your servant over to Ahab for execution? 18:10 As certainly as the Lord your God lives, my master has sent to every nation and kingdom in an effort to find you. When they say, 'He's not here,' he makes them swear an oath that they could not find you. 18:11 Now you say, 'Go and say to your master, "Elijah is back.'" 18:12 But when I leave you, the Lord's spirit will carry you away so I can't find you. If I go tell Ahab I've seen

you, he won't be able to find you and he will kill me. That would not be fair, because your servant has been a loyal follower of the Lord from my youth. 18:13 Certainly my master is aware of what I did when Jezebel was killing the Lord's prophets. I hid one hundred of the Lord's prophets in two caves in two groups of fifty and I brought them food and water. 18:14 Now you say, 'Go and say to your master, "Elijah is back,"' but he will kill me." 18:15 But Elijah said, "As certainly as the Lord who rules over all lives (whom I serve), I will make an appearance before him today."

Elijah Confronts Baal's Prophets

18:16 When Obadiah went and informed Ahab, the king went to meet Elijah. 18:17 When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is it really you, the one who brings disaster on Israel?" 18:18 Elijah replied, "I have not brought disaster on Israel. But you and your father's dynasty have, by abandoning the Lord's commandments and following the Baals. 18:19 Now send out messengers and assemble all Israel before me at Mount Carmel, as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah whom Jezebel supports.

18:20 Ahab sent messengers to all the Israelites and had the prophets assemble at Mount Carmel. 18:21 Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If the Lord is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!" But the people did not say a word. 18:22 Elijah said to them: "I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but there are 450 prophets of Baal. 18:23 Let them bring us two bulls. Let them choose one of the bulls for themselves, cut it up into pieces, and place it on the wood. But they must not set it on fire. I will do the same to the other bull and place it on the wood. But I will not set it on fire. 18:24 Then you will invoke the name of your god, and I will invoke the name of the Lord. The god who responds with fire will demonstrate that he is the true God." All the people responded, "This will be a fair test."

18:25 Elijah told the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls for yourselves and go first, for you are the majority. Invoke the name of your god, but do not light a fire." 18:26 So they took a bull, as he had suggested, and prepared it. They invoked the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "Baal, answer us." But there was no sound and no answer. They jumped around on the altar they had made. 18:27 At noon Elijah mocked them, "Yell louder! After all, he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or perhaps he stepped out for a moment or has taken a trip. Perhaps he is sleeping and needs to be awakened." 18:28 So they yelled louder and, in accordance with their prescribed ritual, mutilated themselves with swords and spears until their bodies were covered with blood. 18:29 Throughout the afternoon they were in an ecstatic frenzy, but there was no sound, no answer, and no response.

18:30 Elijah then told all the people, "Approach me." So all the people approached him. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. 18:31 Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of tribes that descended from Jacob, to whom the Lord had said, "Israel will be your new name." 18:32 With the stones he constructed an altar for the Lord. Around the altar he made a trench large enough to contain two seahs of seed. 18:33 He arranged the wood, cut up the bull, and placed it on the

wood. 18:34 Then he said, "Fill four water jars and pour the water on the offering and the wood." When they had done so, he said, "Do it again." So they did it again. Then he said, "Do it a third time." So they did it a third time. 18:35 The water flowed down all sides of the altar and filled the trench. 18:36 When it was time for the evening offering, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and prayed: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 18:37 Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are the true God and that you are winning back their allegiance." 18:38 Then fire from the Lord fell from the sky. It consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dirt, and licked up the water in the trench. 18:39 When all the people saw this, they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and said, "The Lord is the true God! The Lord is the true God!" 18:40 Elijah told them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Don't let even one of them escape!" So they seized them, and Elijah led them down to the Kishon Valley and executed them there.

18:41 Then Elijah told Ahab, "Go on up and eat and drink, for the sound of a heavy rainstorm can be heard." 18:42 So Ahab went on up to eat and drink, while Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel. He bent down toward the ground and put his face between his knees. 18:43 He told his servant, "Go on up and look in the direction of the sea." So he went on up, looked, and reported, "There is nothing." Seven times Elijah sent him to look. 18:44 The seventh time the servant said, "Look, a small cloud, the size of the palm of a man's hand, is rising up from the sea." Elijah then said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up the chariots and go down, so that the rain won't overtake you.'" 18:45 Meanwhile the sky was covered with dark clouds, the wind blew, and there was a heavy rainstorm. Ahab rode toward Jezreel. 18:46 Now the Lord energized Elijah with power; he tucked his robe into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

PRAYER

Lord, at the end of all of the demonic fraud and noise there is only one true God and that is You. May I be bold to declare Your truth and to stand against the lies of the enemies of truth.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Obadiah, a loyal servant of the Lord who had (unbeknownst to her) hidden 100 prophets from the murderous intentions of Jezebel, was summoned by Ahab to assist him as they each searched half of the kingdom for a source of water. As he traveled he met Elijah who had come out of God-assisted hiding from Ahab.

Elijah told him to bring him to Ahab but Obadiah was afraid Ahab would kill him and though Elijah's request was unfair given his loyalty to the Lord God. Elijah insisted and Obadiah obeyed.

Elijah instructed Ahab to gather all of the false prophets at Mt Carmel, together with the people, then once-gathered he challenged them to build an altar with a sacrificial bull and to call upon their "god" to set it ablaze.

They did so and Elijah taunted them when there was no response, to which they responded by cutting themselves and dancing more furiously until they collapsed in the wasted effort.

Elijah then presented his offering, having people flood it with water, and when he prayed the Lord God not only consumed the offering He also consumed the water and the rocks with fire from Heaven.

Elijah had the people seize all of the false prophets and took them to the Kidron Valley where they were executed. He then prophesied the coming of rain to break the drought. As Ahab and Elijah's servant traveled back to Jezreel using chariots the Lord God empowered Elijah to run fast enough to overtake and precede them there.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

The drought caused Ahab to become desperate enough to respond to Elijah's challenge to a duel with the false prophets.

DISCUSS

Why would Ahab think that he could harm the prophet whom God had empowered to deliver drought to the land?

REFLECT

[Romans 6:23](#) says "The wages of sin are death ..." so denying the Lord God and promoting a false god, as the false prophets had, is the worse sort of sin.

SHARE

When have you experienced or observed a person of strong faith overcome challenges that appeared to be overwhelming?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a time when He protected you from evil.

ACT

Today I will offer praise and thanks to the Lord God for His faithfulness in keeping me from the harm He revealed to me. I humbly agree to fearlessly stand for and with the Lord God in the face of false teaching, trusting Him to give me courage and wisdom.

Be Specific _____

Wednesday (1 Kings 19)

Elijah Runs for His Life

19:1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, including a detailed account of how he killed all the prophets with the sword. 19:2 Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this warning, “May the gods judge me severely if by this time tomorrow I do not take your life as you did theirs!”

19:3 Elijah was afraid, so he got up and fled for his life to Beer Sheba in Judah. He left his servant there, 19:4 while he went a day’s journey into the desert. He went and sat down under a shrub and asked the Lord to take his life: “I’ve had enough! Now, O Lord, take my life. After all, I’m no better than my ancestors.” 19:5 He stretched out and fell asleep under the shrub. All of a sudden an angelic messenger touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” 19:6 He looked and right there by his head was a cake baking on hot coals and a jug of water. He ate and drank and then slept some more. 19:7 The Lord’s angelic messenger came back again, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, for otherwise you won’t be able to make the journey.” 19:8 So he got up and ate and drank. That meal gave him the strength to travel forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

19:9 He went into a cave there and spent the night. All of a sudden the Lord spoke to him, “Why are you here, Elijah?” 19:10 He answered, “I have been absolutely loyal to the Lord, the sovereign God, even though the Israelites have abandoned the agreement they made with you, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and now they want to take my life.” 19:11 The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. Look, the Lord is ready to pass by.”

A very powerful wind went before the Lord, digging into the mountain and causing landslides, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the windstorm there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 19:12 After the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a soft whisper. 19:13 When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his robe and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. All of a sudden a voice asked him, “Why are you here, Elijah?” 19:14 He answered, “I have been absolutely loyal to the Lord, the sovereign God, even though the Israelites have abandoned the agreement they made with you, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and now they want to take my life.” 19:15 The Lord said to him, “Go back the way you came and then head for the Desert of Damascus. Go and anoint Hazael king over Syria. 19:16 You must anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to take your place as prophet. 19:17 Jehu will kill anyone who escapes Hazael’s sword, and Elisha will kill anyone who escapes Jehu’s sword. 19:18 I still have left in Israel seven thousand followers who have not bowed their knees to Baal or kissed the images of him.”

19:19 Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen; he was near the twelfth pair. Elijah passed by him and threw his robe over him. 19:20 He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, then I will follow you.” Elijah said to him, “Go back! Indeed, what have I done to you?” 19:21 Elisha went back and took his

pair of oxen and slaughtered them. He cooked the meat over a fire that he made by burning the harness and yoke. He gave the people meat and they ate. Then he got up and followed Elijah and became his assistant.

PRAYER

Lord, when we are obedient to You, the omnipotent God, we have nothing to fear from mere humans no matter their earthly power nor the fierceness of their rage. May I never shrink from Your service, nor fear for my well-being, due to threats from mere humans.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Jezebel was furious when she heard what Elijah had done and sent word that she intended to seem him dead.

Elijah was fearful, in his flesh, and fled to the desert to hide. There the Lord God provided for him food and water.

When He asked why Elijah was there he replied that despite his faithfulness his life was at-risk – so he wanted God to take him home.

The Lord God ignored Elijah's request and instructed him to go to the mountain where He revealed Himself to him, demonstrating His omnipotence, then He gave Elijah new instructions.

Elijah was to anoint Hazael king over Syria, Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha as his successor. Elijah set out to do as instructed.

All three would be the Lord's instruments of judgment for rebellious Israel as only 7,000 had remained obedient to the Law.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

May Elijah become a little too arrogant in his flesh during his interaction with the false prophets and so when threatened in the flesh he panicked?

DISCUSS

The Lord God answered his prayer to obliterate the water-soaked altar and offering, empowered him to kill the 450 false prophets, and invigorated him to out-run the chariots – so why would Elijah fear a threat from a mere human, Jezebel?

REFLECT

The Lord God ignored Elijah's whining-in-the-flesh, demonstrated His power, then sent him on a new mission. Elijah, to his credit, immediately ceased whining and again stepped out in faith.

SHARE

When have you felt threatened and forgotten that you serve an omnipotent God?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where fear is interfering with your confidence to serve.

ACT

Today I will ask a fellow believer to pray in-agreement with me as I partner with the Holy Spirit to see the Lord God clearly where then enemy has tricked me into taking my eyes off of Him. I will confidently receive His new, or reiterated, instructions; then I will boldly set out in obedient faith.

Be Specific _____

Thursday (1 Kings 20-22)

Ben Hadad Invades Israel

20:1 Now King Ben Hadad of Syria assembled all his army, along with thirty-two other kings with their horses and chariots. He marched against Samaria and besieged and attacked it. 20:2 He sent messengers to King Ahab of Israel, who was in the city. 20:3 He said to him, "This is what Ben Hadad says, 'Your silver and your gold are mine, as well as the best of your wives and sons.'" 20:4 The king of Israel replied, "It is just as you say, my master, O king. I and all I own belong to you."

20:5 The messengers came again and said, "This is what Ben Hadad says, 'I sent this message to you, 'You must give me your silver, gold, wives, and sons.'" 20:6 But now at this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you and they will search through your palace and your servants' houses. They will carry away all your valuables." 20:7 The king of Israel summoned all the leaders of the land and said, "Notice how this man is looking for trouble. Indeed, he demanded my wives, sons, silver, and gold, and I did not resist him." 20:8 All the leaders and people said to him, "Do not give in or agree to his demands." 20:9 So he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad, "Say this to my master, the king, 'I will give you everything you demanded at first from your servant, but I am unable to agree to this latest demand.'" So the messengers went back and gave their report.

20:10 Ben Hadad sent another message to him, "May the gods judge me severely if there is enough dirt left in Samaria for my soldiers to scoop up in their hands." 20:11 The king of Israel replied, "Tell him the one who puts on his battle gear should not boast like one who is taking it off." 20:12 When Ben Hadad

received this reply, he and the other kings were drinking in their quarters. He ordered his servants, "Get ready to attack!" So they got ready to attack the city.

The Lord Delivers Israel

20:13 Now a prophet visited King Ahab of Israel and said, "This is what the Lord says, 'Do you see this huge army? Look, I am going to hand it over to you this very day. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" 20:14 Ahab asked, "By whom will this be accomplished?" He answered, "This is what the Lord says, 'By the servants of the district governors.'" Ahab asked, "Who will launch the attack?" He answered, "You will."

20:15 So Ahab assembled the 232 servants of the district governors. After that he assembled all the Israelite army, numbering 7,000. 20:16 They marched out at noon, while Ben Hadad and the thirty-two kings allied with him were drinking heavily in their quarters. 20:17 The servants of the district governors led the march. When Ben Hadad sent messengers, they reported back to him, "Men are marching out of Samaria." 20:18 He ordered, "Whether they come in peace or to do battle, take them alive." 20:19 They marched out of the city with the servants of the district governors in the lead and the army behind them. 20:20 Each one struck down an enemy soldier; the Syrians fled and Israel chased them. King Ben Hadad of Syria escaped on horseback with some horsemen. 20:21 Then the king of Israel marched out and struck down the horses and chariots; he thoroughly defeated Syria.

The Lord Gives Israel Another Victory

20:22 The prophet visited the king of Israel and instructed him, "Go, fortify your defenses. Determine what you must do, for in the spring the king of Syria will attack you." 20:23 Now the advisers of the king of Syria said to him: "Their God is a god of the mountains. That's why they overpowered us. But if we fight them in the plains, we will certainly overpower them." 20:24 So do this: Dismiss the kings from their command, and replace them with military commanders. 20:25 Muster an army like the one you lost, with the same number of horses and chariots. Then we will fight them in the plains; we will certainly overpower them." He approved their plan and did as they advised.

20:26 In the spring Ben Hadad mustered the Syrian army and marched to Aphek to fight Israel. 20:27 When the Israelites had mustered and had received their supplies, they marched out to face them in battle. When the Israelites deployed opposite them, they were like two small flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the land. 20:28 The prophet visited the king of Israel and said, "This is what the Lord says: 'Because the Syrians said, "The Lord is a god of the mountains and not a god of the valleys," I will hand over to you this entire huge army. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" "

20:29 The armies were deployed opposite each other for seven days. On the seventh day the battle began, and the Israelites killed 100,000 Syrian foot soldiers in one day. 20:30 The remaining 27,000 ran to Aphek and went into the city, but the wall fell on them. Now Ben Hadad ran into the city and hid in an

inner room. 20:31 His advisers said to him, "Look, we have heard that the kings of the Israelite dynasty are kind. Allow us to put sackcloth around our waists and ropes on our heads and surrender to the king of Israel. Maybe he will spare our lives." 20:32 So they put sackcloth around their waists and ropes on their heads and went to the king of Israel. They said, "Your servant Ben Hadad says, 'Please let me live!'" Ahab replied, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." 20:33 The men took this as a good omen and quickly accepted his offer, saying, "Ben Hadad is your brother." Ahab then said, "Go, get him." So Ben Hadad came out to him, and Ahab pulled him up into his chariot. 20:34 Ben Hadad said, "I will return the cities my father took from your father. You may set up markets in Damascus, just as my father did in Samaria." Ahab then said, "I want to make a treaty with you before I dismiss you." So he made a treaty with him and then dismissed him.

A Prophet Denounces Ahab's Actions

20:35 One of the members of the prophetic guild, speaking with divine authority, ordered his companion, "Wound me!" But the man refused to wound him. 20:36 So the prophet said to him, "Because you have disobeyed the Lord, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you." When he left him, a lion attacked and killed him. 20:37 He found another man and said, "Wound me!" So the man wounded him severely. 20:38 The prophet then went and stood by the road, waiting for the king. He also disguised himself by putting a bandage down over his eyes. 20:39 When the king passed by, he called out to the king, "Your servant went out into the heat of the battle, and then a man turned aside and brought me a prisoner. He told me, 'Guard this prisoner. If he ends up missing for any reason, you will pay with your life or with a talent of silver.'" 20:40 Well, it just so happened that while your servant was doing this and that, he disappeared." The king of Israel said to him, "Your punishment is already determined by your own testimony." 20:41 The prophet quickly removed the bandage from his eyes and the king of Israel recognized he was one of the prophets. 20:42 The prophet then said to him, "This is what the Lord says, 'Because you released a man I had determined should die, you will pay with your life and your people will suffer instead of his people.'" 20:43 The king of Israel went home to Samaria bitter and angry.

Ahab Murders Naboth

21:1 After this the following episode took place. Naboth the Jezreelite owned a vineyard in Jezreel adjacent to the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. 21:2 Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard so I can make a vegetable garden out of it, for it is adjacent to my palace. I will give you an even better vineyard in its place, or if you prefer, I will pay you silver for it." 21:3 But Naboth replied to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should sell you my ancestral inheritance."

21:4 So Ahab went into his palace, bitter and angry that Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not sell to you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, pouted, and would not eat. 21:5 Then his wife Jezebel came in and said to him, "Why do you have a bitter attitude and refuse to eat?" 21:6 He answered her, "While I was talking to Naboth the Jezreelite, I said to him, 'Sell me your vineyard for

silver, or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not sell you my vineyard.'" 21:7 His wife Jezebel said to him, "You are the king of Israel! Get up, eat some food, and have a good time. I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you."

21:8 She wrote out orders, signed Ahab's name to them, and sealed them with his seal. She then sent the orders to the leaders and to the nobles who lived in Naboth's city. 21:9 This is what she wrote: "Observe a time of fasting and seat Naboth in front of the people. 21:10 Also seat two villains opposite him and have them testify, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death."

21:11 The men of the city, the leaders and the nobles who lived there, followed the written orders Jezebel had sent them. 21:12 They observed a time of fasting and put Naboth in front of the people. 21:13 The two villains arrived and sat opposite him. Then the villains testified against Naboth right before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death. 21:14 Then they reported to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death."

21:15 When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up, take possession of the vineyard Naboth the Jezreelite refused to sell you for silver, for Naboth is no longer alive; he's dead." 21:16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

21:17 The Lord told Elijah the Tishbite: 21:18 "Get up, go down and meet King Ahab of Israel who lives in Samaria. He is at the vineyard of Naboth; he has gone down there to take possession of it. 21:19 Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: "Haven't you committed murder and taken possession of the property of the deceased?"' Then say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: "In the spot where dogs licked up Naboth's blood they will also lick up your blood – yes, yours!"'"

21:20 When Elijah arrived, Ahab said to him, "So, you have found me, my enemy!" Elijah replied, "I have found you, because you are committed to doing evil in the sight of the Lord. 21:21 The Lord says, 'Look, I am ready to bring disaster on you. I will destroy you and cut off every last male belonging to Ahab in Israel, including even the weak and incapacitated. 21:22 I will make your dynasty like those of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah because you angered me and made Israel sin.' 21:23 The Lord says this about Jezebel, 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the outer wall of Jezreel.' 21:24 As for Ahab's family, dogs will eat the ones who die in the city, and the birds of the sky will eat the ones who die in the country." 21:25 (There had never been anyone like Ahab, who was firmly committed to doing evil in the sight of the Lord, urged on by his wife Jezebel. 21:26 He was so wicked he worshiped the disgusting idols, just like the Amorites whom the Lord had driven out from before the Israelites.)

21:27 When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted. He slept in sackcloth and walked around dejected. 21:28 The Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, 21:29 "Have you noticed how Ahab shows remorse before me? Because he shows remorse before me, I will not bring disaster on his dynasty during his lifetime, but during the reign of his son."

Ahab Dies in Battle

22:1 There was no war between Syria and Israel for three years. 22:2 In the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah came down to visit the king of Israel. 22:3 The king of Israel said to his servants, "Surely you recognize that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us, though we are hesitant to reclaim it from the king of Syria." 22:4 Then he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to attack Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I will support you; my army and horses are at your disposal." 22:5 Then Jehoshaphat added, "First seek an oracle from the Lord." 22:6 So the king of Israel assembled about four hundred prophets and asked them, "Should I attack Ramoth Gilead or not?" They said, "Attack! The sovereign one will hand it over to the king." 22:7 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord still here, that we may ask him?" 22:8 The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can seek the Lord's will. But I despise him because he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. Jehoshaphat said, "The king should not say such things." 22:9 The king of Israel summoned an official and said, "Quickly bring Micaiah son of Imlah."

22:10 Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their respective thrones, dressed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them. 22:11 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah made iron horns and said, "This is what the Lord says, 'With these you will gore Syria until they are destroyed.'" 22:12 All the prophets were prophesying the same, saying, "Attack Ramoth Gilead! You will succeed; the Lord will hand it over to the king." 22:13 Now the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the prophets are in complete agreement that the king will succeed. Your words must agree with theirs; you must predict success." 22:14 But Micaiah said, "As certainly as the Lord lives, I will say what the Lord tells me to say."

22:15 When he came before the king, the king asked him, "Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth Gilead or not?" He answered him, "Attack! You will succeed; the Lord will hand it over to the king." 22:16 The king said to him, "How many times must I make you solemnly promise in the name of the Lord to tell me only the truth?" 22:17 Micaiah said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the Lord said, 'They have no master. They should go home in peace.'" 22:18 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you he does not prophesy prosperity for me, but disaster?" 22:19 Micaiah said, "That being the case, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left. 22:20 The Lord said, 'Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?' One said this and another that. 22:21 Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the Lord. He said, 'I will deceive him.' The Lord asked him, 'How?' 22:22 He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' The Lord said, 'Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.' 22:23 So now, look, the Lord has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the Lord has decreed disaster for you." 22:24 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah approached, hit Micaiah on the jaw, and said, "Which way did

the Lord's spirit go when he went from me to speak to you?" 22:25 Micaiah replied, "Look, you will see in the day when you go into an inner room to hide." 22:26 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the city official and Joash the king's son. 22:27 Say, 'This is what the king says, 'Put this man in prison. Give him only a little bread and water until I safely return.''" 22:28 Micaiah said, "If you really do safely return, then the Lord has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Take note, all you people."

22:29 The king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah attacked Ramoth Gilead. 22:30 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and then enter into the battle; but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and then entered into the battle. 22:31 Now the king of Syria had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight common soldiers or high-ranking officers; fight only the king of Israel." 22:32 When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "He must be the king of Israel." So they turned and attacked him, but Jehoshaphat cried out. 22:33 When the chariot commanders realized he was not the king of Israel, they turned away from him. 22:34 Now an archer shot an arrow at random, and it struck the king of Israel between the plates of his armor. The king ordered his charioteer, "Turn around and take me from the battle line, because I'm wounded." 22:35 While the battle raged throughout the day, the king stood propped up in his chariot opposite the Syrians. He died in the evening; the blood from the wound ran down into the bottom of the chariot. 22:36 As the sun was setting, a cry went through the camp, "Each one should return to his city and to his homeland." 22:37 So the king died and was taken to Samaria, where they buried him. 22:38 They washed off the chariot at the pool of Samaria (this was where the prostitutes bathed); dogs licked his blood, just as the Lord had said would happen.

22:39 The rest of the events of Ahab's reign, including a record of his accomplishments and how he built a luxurious palace and various cities, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 22:40 Ahab passed away. His son Ahaziah replaced him as king.

Jehoshaphat's Reign over Judah

22:41 In the fourth year of King Ahab's reign over Israel, Asa's son Jehoshaphat became king over Judah. 22:42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. 22:43 He followed in his father Asa's footsteps and was careful to do what the Lord approved. (22:44) However, the high places were not eliminated; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense on the high places. 22:44 (22:45) Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel.

22:45 The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat's reign, including his successes and military exploits, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Judah. 22:46 He removed from the land any male cultic prostitutes who had managed to survive the reign of his father Asa. 22:47 There was no king in Edom at this time; a governor ruled. 22:48 Jehoshaphat built a fleet of large merchant ships to travel to Ophir for gold, but they never made the voyage because they were shipwrecked in Ezion Geber. 22:49

Then Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my sailors join yours in the fleet," but Jehoshaphat refused.

22:50 Jehoshaphat passed away and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his ancestor David. His son Jehoram replaced him as king.

Ahaziah's Reign over Israel

22:51 In the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign over Judah, Ahab's son Ahaziah became king over Israel in Samaria. He ruled for two years over Israel. 22:52 He did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed in the footsteps of his father and mother; like Jeroboam son of Nebat, he encouraged Israel to sin. 22:53 He worshiped and bowed down to Baal, angering the Lord God of Israel just as his father had done.

PRAYER

Lord, those who fail to follow Your teaching and who fail to listen to Your voice of correction are doomed to disaster. May I be always-accountable to You, through faithful fellow believers who prayerfully hold me to Your Word, and may I be obedient in my choices.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Ben Hadad, still king of Syria, gathered thirty-two other kings and attacked Israel on the mountain, but the Lord God protected them. They gathered again and attacked in the plain, and again the Lord God delivered Israel. But instead of killing Hadad as the Lord had instructed Ahab made a treaty – which disobedience brought judgment upon Ahab and the people.

Ahab wanted the land of Naboth and offered to buy it or trade better land for it but Naboth refused to sell land that had been in his family for generations. When Queen Jezebel heard of it she schemed to have Naboth falsely accused and stoned to death on Ahab's behalf.

When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead he went to take the land but the Lord God sent Elijah to confront him with a terrible prophesy of punishment for the murder of Naboth and for Ahab's persistent rebellion.

When Ahab responded with a repentant heart the Lord God postponed the punishment, the obliteration of Ahab's entire family, until after his son took the throne.

Ahab of Israel and Jehosophat of Judah joined forces to attack the Syrians who occupied Ramoth Gilead. The consulted the 400 false prophets who encouraged them but Jehosophat insisted that they consult a true prophet. Ahab resisted because he did not like bad news and as expected the true prophet, Micaiah (after first mocking Ahab and the false prophets a bit) prophesied disaster.

Ahab and Jehosaphat ignored the prophet of God and attacked and were defeated and Ahab was mortally wounded, his blood licked up by the dogs, just as Elijah had prophesied.

Jehosaphat ruled Judah for twenty-five years and continued the mostly-faithful example of his father Asa, removing all male cultic prostitutes who had escaped Asa's purge. He did fail to remove the pagan places of worship on the high places. His son Jehoram followed him as king.

In Israel Ahaziah followed Ahab as king and was as evil and rebellious as his father and mother.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Ahab knew that when his evil wife Jezebel said she'd take care of things with Naboth she would have him murdered, and he said nothing, which is why God held him responsible for the murder.

DISCUSS

Since Micaiah, like Elijah, had a history of speaking truth why would Ahab and Jehosaphat ignore him at risk of disaster?

REFLECT

Jehosaphat incrementally improved things in Judah by removing the last of the male cultic prostitutes, and he continued his personal obedience to the Lord God, but he inexplicably failed to remove the pagan places of sacrifice which continued to ensnare many of the people in deception.

SHARE

When have you observed a leader who tried to live faithfully, and who made small efforts to deal with bad doctrine within the fellowship which they led, but still seemed blind to or unconcerned about obvious evidences of sin?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you have been dealing decisively with a place of sin in your life, or business, or family, or fellowship, or other association, and one to which you have been blind.

ACT

Today I will celebrate with a fellow believer what the Holy Spirit has done in and through me to the glory of the Lord God. I will ask that same believer to pray in-agreement that I will have the courage to respond decisively to repent (turn away from) the unaddressed sin which He has revealed to me.

Be Specific _____

Friday (2 Kings 1–2:18)

Elijah Confronts the King and His Commanders

1:1 After Ahab died, Moab rebelled against Israel. 1:2 Ahaziah fell through a window lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria and was injured. He sent messengers with these orders, “Go, ask Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will survive this injury.”

1:3 But the Lord’s angelic messenger told Elijah the Tishbite, “Get up, go to meet the messengers from the king of Samaria. Say this to them: ‘You must think there is no God in Israel! That explains why you are on your way to seek an oracle from Baal Zebub the god of Ekron. 1:4 Therefore this is what the Lord says, “You will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die!”’” So Elijah went on his way.

1:5 When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, “Why have you returned?” 1:6 They replied, “A man came up to meet us. He told us, “Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: “You must think there is no God in Israel! That explains why you are sending for an oracle from Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron. Therefore you will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die.”’” 1:7 The king asked them, “Describe the appearance of this man who came up to meet you and told you these things.” 1:8 They replied, “He was a hairy man and had a leather belt tied around his waist.” The king said, “He is Elijah the Tishbite.”

1:9 The king sent a captain and his fifty soldiers to retrieve Elijah. The captain went up to him, while he was sitting on the top of a hill. He told him, “Prophet, the king says, ‘Come down!’” 1:10 Elijah replied to the captain, “If I am indeed a prophet, may fire come down from the sky and consume you and your fifty soldiers!” Fire then came down from the sky and consumed him and his fifty soldiers.

1:11 The king sent another captain and his fifty soldiers to retrieve Elijah. He went up and told him, “Prophet, this is what the king says, ‘Come down at once!’” 1:12 Elijah replied to them, “If I am indeed a prophet, may fire come down from the sky and consume you and your fifty soldiers!” Fire from God came down from the sky and consumed him and his fifty soldiers.

1:13 The king sent a third captain and his fifty soldiers. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. He begged for mercy, “Prophet, please have respect for my life and for the lives of these fifty servants of yours. 1:14 Indeed, fire came down from the sky and consumed the two captains who came before me, along with their men. So now, please have respect for my life.” 1:15 The Lord’s angelic

messenger said to Elijah, "Go down with him. Don't be afraid of him." So he got up and went down with him to the king.

1:16 Elijah said to the king, "This is what the Lord says, 'You sent messengers to seek an oracle from Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron. You must think there is no God in Israel from whom you can seek an oracle! Therefore you will not leave the bed you lie on, for you will certainly die.'"

1:17 He died just as the Lord had prophesied through Elijah. In the second year of the reign of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat over Judah, Ahaziah's brother Jehoram replaced him as king of Israel, because he had no son. 1:18 The rest of the events of Ahaziah's reign, including his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

Elijah Makes a Swift Departure

2:1 Just before the Lord took Elijah up to heaven in a windstorm, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. 2:2 Elijah told Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As certainly as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 2:3 Some members of the prophetic guild in Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that today the Lord is going to take your master from you?" He answered, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

2:4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he replied, "As certainly as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho. 2:5 Some members of the prophetic guild in Jericho approached Elisha and said, "Do you know that today the Lord is going to take your master from you?" He answered, "Yes, I know. Be quiet."

2:6 Elijah said to him, "Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he replied, "As certainly as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they traveled on together. 2:7 The fifty members of the prophetic guild went and stood opposite them at a distance, while Elijah and Elisha stood by the Jordan. 2:8 Elijah took his cloak, folded it up, and hit the water with it. The water divided, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

2:9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "What can I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of the prophetic spirit that energizes you."

2:10 Elijah replied, "That's a difficult request! If you see me taken from you, may it be so, but if you don't, it will not happen."

2:11 As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a fiery chariot pulled by fiery horses appeared. They went between Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah went up to heaven in a windstorm. 2:12 While Elisha was watching, he was crying out, "My father, my father! The chariot and horsemen of Israel!" Then he could no longer see him. He grabbed his clothes and tore them in two. 2:13 He picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen off him, and went back and stood on the shore of the Jordan. 2:14 He took the cloak

that had fallen off Elijah, hit the water with it, and said, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" When he hit the water, it divided and Elisha crossed over.

2:15 When the members of the prophetic guild in Jericho, who were standing at a distance, saw him do this, they said, "The spirit that energized Elijah rests upon Elisha." They went to meet him and bowed down to the ground before him. 2:16 They said to him, "Look, there are fifty capable men with your servants. Let them go and look for your master, for the wind sent from the Lord may have carried him away and dropped him on one of the hills or in one of the valleys." But Elisha replied, "Don't send them out." 2:17 But they were so insistent, he became embarrassed. So he said, "Send them out." They sent the fifty men out and they looked for three days, but could not find Elijah. 2:18 When they came back, Elisha was staying in Jericho. He said to them, "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't go'?"

PRAYER

Lord, when we look for truth from any spiritual source but You Lord we are in rebellion and in trouble. May I never consult anything but Your Word and Your Holy Spirit for spiritual truth. Lord, Elijah had been an exceptional mentor to Elisha, so when his time was done Elisha was ready to do all that he had done and more. May I mentor one or more people so that they will be equipped to serve You in much greater ways than I have.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Moab rebelled against the rule of Israel and then King Ahaziah of Israel was badly injured falling through lattice on the upper floor of the castle.

Instead of consulting a prophet of Israel Ahaziah sent for an oracle from the false god of Baal.

The Lord God informed Elijah who intercepted Ahaziah's messengers and sent them back with the word from God that because he had done so Ahaziah would die where he laid in his bed.

Ahaziah sent soldiers to get Elijah three times, the first two Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume them, the third time the captain begged for mercy and God instructed Elijah to go to Ahaziah.

Elijah delivered his prophesy in person and Ahaziah died. His brother Jehoram followed him as king because Ahziah had no son. Elisha, knowing in his Spirit that the Lord God was to take Elijah – his mentor – away refused to part from him and instructed prophets in the three towns they visited to be quiet when they prophesied Elijah's imminent departure.

When it was time Elijah asked Elisha what gift he wanted, he asked for twice Elijah's prophetic gift, to which Elijah replied that it was a lot to ask but would be granted if Elisha witnessed Elijah's departure. He did.

When first crossing the Jordan Elijah struck the water with his cloak and it parted for them, on his return trip without Elijah, Elisha did the same and the watching guild of local prophets bowed in respect to Elisha's gift from God.

Those same prophets noted that the water was poor, affecting health and crops, so Elisha blessed it and made it abundant and clean.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

When Ahaziah sent for word from Baal he was consulting Satan. Elijah made that clear when he declared "You must think there is no God in Israel!"

DISCUSS

Might Elijah have wanted Elisha to see how he was taken-up by the Lord God so that Elisha would not only receive a double-portion of prophetic power but also be visually reminded Who it was he would be serving?

REFLECT

The obliteration of the first two groups of soldiers demonstrated that Elijah did not answer to a mere human king but to the Lord God. Elisha's parting of the Jordan was a visual evidence of his linkage to the very same omnipotent God of the Exodus.

SHARE

When have you observed a Christian consulting instruments of evil for spiritual guidance, such as a "Magic 8-Ball", Tarot cards, Ouija board, horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc.? When have you observed a leader who mentored his successor? When there was a transfer of responsibility was it obvious that the one mentored had been well-prepared?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place in your life where you may engage in a superstitious or otherwise non-Biblical means of dealing with an unclear situation, and to reveal to you someone He wants you to mentor.

ACT

Today I will confess and repent of any place that the Holy Spirit has revealed as seeking guidance from a non-Biblical source. It may be as obvious as a "Magic 8-Ball", Tarot cards, Ouija board, horoscopes,

fortune tellers, or the like, or some other “throw salt over your shoulder”, avoidance of a hotel room numbered “13”, astrology-numerology, etc. I will also make myself available as His instrument of mentoring to the one whom He has designated.

Be Specific _____

Saturday (Obadiah 1, Psalms 82–83)

God’s Judgment on Edom|Edom’s Approaching Destruction

1:1 The vision that Obadiah saw.

The Lord God says this concerning Edom:

God’s Judgment on Edom|Edom’s Approaching Destruction

We have heard a report from the Lord. An envoy was sent among the nations, saying, “Arise! Let us make war against Edom!”

1:2 The Lord says, “Look! I will make you a weak nation; you will be greatly despised!

1:3 Your presumptuous heart has deceived you – you who reside in the safety of the rocky cliffs, whose home is high in the mountains. You think to yourself, ‘No one can bring me down to the ground!’

1:4 Even if you were to soar high like an eagle, even if you were to make your nest among the stars, I can bring you down even from there!” says the Lord.

1:5 “If thieves came to rob you during the night, they would steal only as much as they wanted! If grape pickers came to harvest your vineyards, they would leave some behind for the poor! But you will be totally destroyed!

1:6 How the people of Esau will be thoroughly plundered! Their hidden valuables will be ransacked!

1:7 All your allies will force you from your homeland! Your treaty partners will deceive you and overpower you. Your trusted friends will set an ambush for you that will take you by surprise!

1:8 At that time,” the Lord says, “I will destroy the wise sages of Edom! the advisers from Esau’s mountain!

1:9 Your warriors will be shattered, O Teman, so that everyone will be destroyed from Esau’s mountain!

Edom’s Treachery Against Judah

1:10 "Because you violently slaughtered your relatives, the people of Jacob, shame will cover you, and you will be destroyed forever.

1:11 You stood aloof while strangers took his army captive, and foreigners advanced to his gates. When they cast lots over Jerusalem, you behaved as though you were in league with them.

1:12 You should not have gloated when your relatives suffered calamity. You should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah when they were destroyed. You should not have boasted when they suffered adversity.

1:13 You should not have entered the city of my people when they experienced distress. You should not have joined in gloating over their misfortune when they suffered distress. You should not have looted their wealth when they endured distress.

1:14 You should not have stood at the fork in the road to slaughter those trying to escape. You should not have captured their refugees when they suffered adversity.

The Coming Day of the Lord

1:15 "For the day of the Lord is approaching for all the nations! Just as you have done, so it will be done to you. You will get exactly what your deeds deserve.

1:16 For just as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink, and they will gulp down; they will be as though they had never been.

1:17 But on Mount Zion there will be a remnant of those who escape, and it will be a holy place once again. The descendants of Jacob will conquer those who had conquered them.

1:18 The descendants of Jacob will be a fire, and the descendants of Joseph a flame. The descendants of Esau will be like stubble. They will burn them up and devour them. There will not be a single survivor of the descendants of Esau!" Indeed, the Lord has spoken it.

1:19 The people of the Negev will take possession of Esau's mountain, and the people of the Shephelah will take possession of the land of the Philistines. They will also take possession of the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and the people of Benjamin will take possession of Gilead.

1:20 The exiles of this fortress of the people of Israel will take possession of what belongs to the people of Canaan, as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will take possession of the towns of the Negev.

1:21 Those who have been delivered will go up on Mount Zion in order to rule over Esau's mountain.

Then the Lord will reign as King!

Psalm 82

82:1 A psalm of Asaph.

God stands in the assembly of El; in the midst of the gods he renders judgment.

82:2 He says, "How long will you make unjust legal decisions and show favoritism to the wicked?
(Selah)

82:3 Defend the cause of the poor and the fatherless!

Vindicate the oppressed and suffering!

82:4 Rescue the poor and needy!

Deliver them from the power of the wicked!

82:5 They neither know nor understand.

They stumble around in the dark, while all the foundations of the earth crumble.

82:6 I thought, 'You are gods; all of you are sons of the Most High.'

82:7 Yet you will die like mortals; you will fall like all the other rulers."

82:8 Rise up, O God, and execute judgment on the earth!

For you own all the nations.

Psalm 83

83:1 A song, a psalm of Asaph.

O God, do not be silent!

Do not ignore us! Do not be inactive, O God!

83:2 For look, your enemies are making a commotion; those who hate you are hostile.

83:3 They carefully plot against your people, and make plans to harm the ones you cherish.

83:4 They say, "Come on, let's annihilate them so they are no longer a nation!

Then the name of Israel will be remembered no more.”

83:5 Yes, they devise a unified strategy; they form an alliance against you.

83:6 It includes the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites,

83:7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre.

83:8 Even Assyria has allied with them, lending its strength to the descendants of Lot. (Selah)

83:9 Do to them as you did to Midian – as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the Kishon River!

83:10 They were destroyed at Endor; their corpses were like manure on the ground.

83:11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their rulers like Zebah and Zalmunna,

83:12 who said, “Let’s take over the pastures of God!”

83:13 O my God, make them like dead thistles, like dead weeds blown away by the wind!

83:14 Like the fire that burns down the forest, or the flames that consume the mountainsides,

83:15 chase them with your gale winds, and terrify them with your windstorm.

83:16 Cover their faces with shame, so they might seek you, O Lord.

83:17 May they be humiliated and continually terrified!

May they die in shame!

83:18 Then they will know that you alone are the Lord, the sovereign king over all the earth.

PRAYER

Lord, Esau made choice after choice, most of them poor ones. The Lord God knew His heart and therefore his future, thus Esau was “hated” for the purpose of the future as he was an unfit instrument. Obadiah delivered the inevitable prophesy. May I recognize that each decision, piled on top of those which came before it, has a cumulative effect. Before I drift into an Esau-heart may the Holy Spirit find enough teachability in me to lead me to repent and return to a right-place before the Lord God.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Obadiah was the Lord God’s prophet to “... the people of Esau”, Edom. Esau had done the forbidden, married a Canaanite woman, actually three of them. There is no Biblical evidence what he was

effectively disciplined by his father, either due to his father's neglect, or his refusal to learn. Esau later failed to demonstrate any serious interest in a relationship with the Lord God. The people who followed, with a few notable exceptions, continued in the same way and became increasingly hostile to the children of God.

Obadiah recited the list of their offenses, especially those against Israel and Kudah, and then warned them "For the day of the Lord is approaching for all the nations! Just as you have done, so it will be done to you. You will get exactly what your deeds deserve."

Obadiah compared the tribes and nations "The descendants of Jacob will be a fire, and the descendants of Joseph a flame. The descendants of Esau will be like stubble. They will burn them up and devour them. There will not be a single survivor of the descendants of Esau! Indeed, the Lord has spoken it."

He described how their lands would be redistributed "The people of the Negev will take possession of Esau's mountain, and the people of the Shephelah will take possession of the land of the Philistines. They will also take possession of the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and the people of Benjamin will take possession of Gilead. The exiles of this fortress of the people of Israel will take possession of what belongs to the people of Canaan, as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will take possession of the towns of the Negev. Those who have been delivered will go up on Mount Zion in order to rule over Esau's mountain."

Obadiah concluded "Then the Lord will reign as King!"

Asaph's Psalm, numbered eighty-two, was a wisdom-song with an imprecatory prayer where he asked the Lord God to judge and punish the Canaanites and their false religion.

Asaph's Psalm, numbered eighty-three, returns to the petition-song theme for the Lord God's rescue and also contained an imprecatory prayer for the destruction of their enemies.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Esau was in trouble from the womb as the omniscient-Lord God knew his heart and He knew from the beginning through the end. He is the Creator of time and therefore not limited to temporary linear time. He always kept His part of every covenant.

DISCUSS

The entire Word of God teaches that in the end all of ones striving and acquisition of worldly things, such as Esau's descendants, will be worthless without a saving relationship with the Lord? Why would Asaph expect the Lord God to relent from His judgment of the nation of Israel after the long history of chronic rebellion?

REFLECT

Asaph seemed to see mostly the consequences rather than the cause of Israel's troubles. While the children of God suffered, mostly due to their own poor choices, in the end a repentant and faithful remnant will be preserved.

SHARE

When have you observed someone, though they be filled with arrogance toward the Lord God, do well in the world's eyes - only to end their life empty and sad? When have you had troubles - and later realized that if you had focused on the cause rather than the symptoms of the trouble you would have found relief sooner?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you have been resisting His leading and as a result have built-up a wall between you and the Lord, and to reveal to you a list of times when He has protected and/or provided for you.

ACT

Today I will confess and repent, seek and receive the Lord God's forgiveness, and I will listen more-closely to the Holy Spirit so that I will not drift into an Esau-heart condition.

Be Specific _____

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Note 1: These Studies often rely upon the guidance of the NET Translators from their associated notes. Careful attention has been given to cite that source where it has been quoted directly or closely paraphrased. Feedback is encouraged where credit has not been sufficiently assigned.

Note 2: When NET text is quoted in commentary and discussion all pronouns referring to God are capitalized, though they are lower-case in the original NET text.

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