

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 21 w/Answers

1 and 2 Kings (Part 2)

We will continue our study of 1 and 2 Kings in this lesson by completing our look at 1 Kings, Chapters 16-22. As we noted in the last lesson, a vast majority of the kings turned their backs on God and led the people of Israel to follow after pagan gods and idol worship.



As we continue our study, we should also consider the backdrop of 1 and 2 Kings, namely the three religious periods of Israel. The first period, from 931 BC to 874 BC, is known as the "Sin of Jeroboam". Jeroboam introduced the worship of golden calves in Bethel and Dan. The second period, from 874 BC to 841 BC, is known as the "Sin of Ahab". It was the period when Baalism became an established religion. The third period, from 841 BC to 722 BC, is known as the "Period of Half Reform". During this period, Jehu brought religious reform back – but only back from worshipping Baal. Unfortunately, they continued to worship the golden idols that were originally introduced by Jeroboam.

Using this as a backdrop, we will begin our study this week in the middle of Chapter 16, and we will examine the kings and events that will lead up to the Prophet Elijah's confrontation with the priests of Baal.

So, review Chapters 16-22 of 1 Kings, and answer the following:

1. How did Omri become King, and what were his accomplishments - both good and evil?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Omri became king after leading the people against Zimri, the then-current king, who had taken the throne through the assassination of Elah. When the people heard that Zimri had become king by killing Elah, they rallied behind Omri, then-captain of the guard. He led the army in capturing Tirzah, which prompted Zimri to commit suicide. However, when Omri became king, only half of the people supported him. This led to the kingdom having two kings for approximately five years, from 885 BC to 880 BC; the other king being Tibni.
 - b. ANSWER 2: During Omri's reign, he built the city of Samaria on a 300-ft-high hill; he walked in the way of Jeroboam and led the people to sin. He also became the father of Ahab, the next king of Israel.
2. What were the political and spiritual results of Ahab's marriage to Jezebel?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Ahab arranged a political marriage between himself and Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidonians, and Ahab "went and served Baal, and worshipped him."
 - b. ANSWER 2: This marriage brought on another period of fervent Baal worship, and Jezebel was named the high priestess of Baal. In 1 Kings 16:32-33, it is recorded that an altar and "Asherah pole" were erected in the temple of Baal in Samaria; and Baal was, in effect, established as the official religion of Israel.
3. During the time of Baal worship that Ahab introduced, how many people did NOT follow Baal but continued to worship only God? (see 1 Kings 19:18)
 - a. ANSWER: God tells Elijah that He had reserved 7,000 who did not bow down to Baal.

4. In 1 Kings 17:1-11, we read the story of Elijah at the Brook of Cherith. Summarize the story and how it might apply today.
- ANSWER 1: After Elijah tells Ahab that he (Elijah), not Baal, would control the rain, God leads him into the wilderness to camp beside the brook named Cherith. During these days, God sends food to Elijah using ravens as messengers. Elijah remains refreshed and nourished as he camps by the brook, until one day when the river dries up due to the drought.
 - ANSWER 2: As we further examine the story, we note that, even though the brook God has told him to camp beside has dried up, Elijah does not complain or question God. Instead, he waits patiently for God's next instruction. Similarly, we can learn from Elijah's example of being obedient to God in both good times and harsh times, waiting patiently on Him. God has a plan for our lives and provides for our every need; we can take hope from Elijah's experience.
 - ANSWER 3: For me personally, this story reminds me of the many places that the Lord has led me and my family to live in all over the world. Many times, I did not want to leave where we were; but God led us to new places - places that resulted in new ministry opportunities and new opportunities for growth in my walk with Him. Even during those times, when the brook seemed so dry, God was there; and His perfect will was accomplished. He has used all of these experiences to test and grow me in ways that would never have been possible had I not followed His call to go, just as Elijah followed God's call. In every case, following His call causes us to grow and to be better equipped to face even bigger challenges, and it enables us to accomplish even bigger victories - just as we will see next in Elijah's life.
5. Summarize the "contest" on Mt. Carmel. In your summary, consider the significance of why Mt. Carmel was chosen, and also why fire was chosen. (see 1 Kings 18:16-45)
- ANSWER 1: A number of observations can be made by looking at the "contest" between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. James 5:17 tells us, for instance, that it did not rain for three years and six months. This meant that water was very scarce, thus making Elijah's gesture of throwing the precious water on the altar even more significant. He, in effect, trusted all that he had to God. Furthermore, the site chosen for the contest was Mt. Carmel, the home (or dwelling place) of Baal, just as Mt. Sinai was seen as the dwelling place of God. Elijah had not only chosen to have the contest on their "turf", he even allowed all of their prophets to participate - a 450-to-1 contest.
 - ANSWER 2: To make sure that they would have no excuse, Elijah even allowed the prophets of Baal to choose their own oxen; and since Baal was the god of fire, a contest of fire would seem to totally favor the Baal prophets and their god Baal. As the contest goes on, the prophets literally wear themselves out trying to summon fire from their god; all the while, Elijah mocks them and teases them, which agitates them even further. Finally, exhausted and drained of energy, they watch Elijah build an altar and soak it with water. The altar was soaked not just once, but three times! Then Elijah calls on the name of God, and God answers with a fire that doesn't just consume the sacrifice; it even consumes the water and the altar!
 - ANSWER 3: Following the victory, Elijah has the 450 prophets of Baal killed, and the drought ends. Elijah returns to Ahab and tells him that heavy rains are coming. When Ahab is able to confirm that the rains are coming, he races on his horse to Jezebel to tell her all that has happened. Elijah outruns him and is there when Jezebel sends him a message that by noon tomorrow, she will have Elijah killed. Hearing this news, Elijah fears for his life and runs and hides on Mt. Horeb.
6. What happens on Mt. Horeb? What other significant event took place centuries earlier at Mt. Horeb?
- ANSWER 1; Overcome with great fear for his life, Elijah runs into the wilderness to hide on Mt. Horeb. Being in such despair, he even considers suicide; he ultimately collapses into a deep sleep from exhaustion and depression under a juniper tree. Angels wake him to eat; and then he travels forty days and forty nights to Mt. Horeb, where the law had been broken centuries earlier. Elijah is now at the spiritual low point of his entire life. In 1 Kings 19:9, God asks him if he knows why he is at Mt. Horeb. God then passes by the cave in the form of a very strong wind, then an earthquake, and then as fire. Finally, as a still, small voice, God begins to reassure Elijah, and Elijah confesses to God that he believes he is the only believer left on earth.
 - ANSWER 2: God responds to Elijah's fears by commanding him to go and anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel; and Jehu will carry out the demise of the house of Ahab. He also commands Elijah to anoint the prophet who will take Elijah's place, and he tells Elijah of the remnant of 7,000 that God has preserved, and who have not bowed their knee to Baal.

7. What was the basic error in Elijah's thinking that he was the last prophet?

- a. ANSWER: His fear, if real, would have meant that God's plan would have died when Elijah died. It also implied that Elijah had imagined a larger display of God's power being brought down on Jezebel and Ahab, and that he was disappointed when he did not see it. Elijah failed to realize that God's plans cannot be defeated, and that God is all-knowing; nothing that God intends to accomplish will be left unaccomplished.

8. Summarize from Chapter 20 the siege of Ben-Hadad against Ahab.

- a. ANSWER 1: In 1 Kings Chapter 20 we read about Ben-Hadad (II), who reigned from 860 BC to 841 BC as the king of Syria. He forms an alliance with 32 other kings, and they besiege the city of Samaria, whose gates have been closed tight with Ahab and his soldiers inside. Ben-Hadad then sends two conditions of surrender: (1) all of Ahab and his army's silver and gold, and (2) all of Ahab and his army's wives and children. After Ahab answers back, saying that he will agree to these terms; Ben-Hadad then sends back a third condition: that Ben-Hadad's servants will be allowed to go through all of Ahab and his soldiers' houses and take whatever they want. This greatly displeases Ahab, and he denies this demand. At this point, God intervenes and tells Ahab how to fight this battle and win. The Israelites take the battle to Ben-Hadad and defeat most his army while they are lying in their tents drunk. Ben-Hadad and a few of his horsemen escape.
- b. ANSWER 2: Later, the Syrians would declare that the victory occurred only because they fought the battle in the hills and that Israel's god is a god of the hill country, and not a god of the valley. They believe that if they can draw Israel into battle in the valley, they will win. In response and in a demonstration of His great power, God gives Ahab a great victory with only an army of slightly over 7,000 men. In a single day, they slew over 100,000 men.

9. Compare 1 Kings 21:17-19 with 1 Kings 22:29-38. How do they relate?

- a. ANSWER: The verses in chapter 22 describe the battle in which Ahab is slain, dies and is buried. It depicts the very direct fulfillment of God's prophecy regarding Ahab and his death, as the dogs lick up his blood.

We will end this lesson with the death of Ahab, and the narrative moves back to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and Jehoshaphat their king.

During the coming week, let's remember the faith of Elijah, and his willingness to follow God's will for his life, even when it meant living by a dry brook. Our study reveals to us that no matter how overwhelming that our troubles might appear looming on the horizon, we can have faith that God is with us and will grant us victory, just as he gave Ahab's tiny army victory over an army of over 100,000 men.

Thanks for studying with us. Have a great week everyone.

In Christ,

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