

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 26

Day 1

1 Kings 20-22. This is the end of the accounts of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. We read a briefer version of this in 2 Chronicles. A pattern emerged from the history of Israel and Judah that laid a foundation for the future. God spoke very clearly to David and Solomon concerning His judgment on the Children of Israel. This is why the Kingdom divided. After this, the northern Kingdom of Israel had one wicked king after another. Each king was judged according to his relationship with God, measured against the Torah of God. Israel declined through the apostasy of their kings. Prophets were sent to warn the kings, so that they were without excuse. Elijah was among the greatest of the Prophets. He confronted Ahab and the false prophets. Elijah stood alone but he was not the only person who remained faithful to God. God ensured that there were 7000 others who had not become idolatrous. Elisha followed Elijah and each generation heard the prophetic Word of God. Despite all, in the days that followed, Israel went to captivity after being defeated by Assyria.

At the time of Samuel, Israel had asked for a king like the other nations. Now we understand why this was wrong. God desires the most intimate relationship with His people. No king was able to fulfill this. Hard lessons were necessary before the Kingdom would be restored to God through Yeshua. Ultimately the ten northern Tribes would be dispersed among the nations of the earth. Every one of God's Words came to pass.

Ahab sinned greatly in the matter of Naboth but, for once, was full of remorse. This puts us in mind of the incident of David and Bathsheba, when David sinned and was forgiven when he pleaded with God. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Israel was judged because of David's sin and the same happened to Ahab. Ahab was far less a king than David, but God delayed His judgment when Ahab pleaded with Him. God was merciful, always ready to forgive the repentant sinner.

As we read the history of Israel and become familiar with the entire Bible, we will discover many threads of truth that are linked together. These threads all focus on Yeshua because, not only did God judge Israel for their transgressions, He also remembered His promises to Abraham. This is why the southern Kingdom was not lost entirely, even though Judah was later exiled to Babylon. The northern kings were not of the line of Judah, like the southern kings. God had made a firm promise that the Messiah would come from the line of Judah and the seed of David. Law and

grace, justice and mercy are threads held together throughout Israel's history, in tension with one other. These threads of truth continue to hold together for the entire world today. The Words of God through Yeshua are living and active for both justice and mercy right to the end of time. Continue to meditate on these principles as you read the history of Israel and Judah.

Day 2

2 Kings Chapter 1. Elijah continued his ministry during the reign of Ahab's son Ahaziah. Despite continuing evil, God's prophetic Word was known in Israel. God was not feared, but Elijah was. When Elijah confronted the prophets of baal he spoke uncompromising words and God sent powerful signs, but still Israel did not repent. Elijah was strong under the anointing of God but weak and fearful outside of this. The ministry of the Prophets was not easy because, as James said (James 5:17), they were men like us. We have much to learn from this. Whatever our ministry might be we must stand firm in the Lord to declare His Word. We, *together*, in the coming days, will be like Elijah declaring the Word of God in a failing world. Though we are humanly weak we will be strong in the Lord. We must prepare ourselves so that whenever the occasion arises we must be uncompromising like Elijah. Notice, however, that circumstances change, making it essential that we are hearing God clearly. Elijah called down fire on the men Ahaziah sent to him. Yeshua's disciples wanted to call down fire in the same way (Luke 9:51-56) when He was on His way to Jerusalem, because some Samaritans resisted Him. On this occasion, Yeshua rebuked them because they had misjudged the situation. Yet, there *will* be a time when fire falls from Heaven on sinful people who reject God's end-time prophetic Word (Revelation 16:8-9). There will also be a time when two anointed witnesses destroy God's enemies with fire (Revelation 11:5). We must be very careful to do only what God is doing at a given time, not assuming anything beyond that or looking for formulae for ministry. Yeshua told us to *watch and pray*. These are spiritual ministries. God is watching over His Prophetic Word and we are His ministers, *watching with Him*, not independent of Him. His Word in us causes us to watch and to pray according to His ministry here and now. If we are to be a truly prophetic people we must learn from the Prophets of old how to do only what God is doing and say only what God is saying.

2 Kings 2. Elijah's ministry came to an end and the mantle was passed to Elisha. Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's anointing. He performed more miracles than Elijah and his ministry was somewhat different. Elijah was a type of John the Baptist and Elisha was a type of Yeshua. Though Israel continued to sin, an era of grace to those in need came through Elisha. Elijah and Enoch are the only two people to have ascended into Heaven whilst still living. Notice the details of Elijah's ascension. Many people have read the account too quickly and think that he ascended in a chariot. The chariot passed *between* Elijah and Elisha - he ascended in a *whirlwind*. Elijah took Elisha to three sites in Israel that were significant in the nation's history. Bethel was where Jacob saw the ladder going up to Heaven. Jericho was where Israel had their first victory. The Jordan was where God parted the waters for Israel to enter the Promised Land. Elisha and Elijah went out across the Jordan and Elisha returned through parted waters, symbolically reenacting the first entry to Canaan. Later, this was where Yeshua would be baptized when yet another era for Israel dawned. See how God speaks to you through the symbolic way Elisha was appointed for ministry and Elijah ascended to Heaven.

Even today, pure water comes from the spring at Jericho that Elisha cleansed. The Word of God is still active. We must carefully study all that God has done. These records from the past are also pointers to the future.

2 Kings 3. The accounts of Israel and Judah overlap. Jehoshaphat reigned in Israel through the time of Ahab and Ahaziah and into the reign of Jehoram. Once again Jehoshaphat visited Samaria at a time of trouble. He had witnessed the death of Ahab on a previous visit. Now Moab was threatening Israel. Jehoshaphat advised that Elisha the Prophet be called. This time the Prophet's advice was taken and so Israel was victorious. A valley was miraculously filled with water. God's miracles are unique to the circumstances. Again, we learn that we must always watch what God is doing. God's ways are not our ways and He does not give us a formula to apply to each new circumstance. *Watch and pray*, are key prophetic ministries for all time.

2 Kings 4. Here are some of Elisha's miracles. They are prophetic signposts to Yeshua. They remind us of the Gospel accounts. Elisha multiplied the widow's oil. Yeshua turned water into wine. Elisha raised a boy from the dead. So did Yeshua. Elisha purified the stew. Yeshua brought the pure Word of God. Elisha fed a hundred men with twenty loaves and a portion of grain. Yeshua fed 5000 people with five loaves and two small fish. See what the Holy Spirit shows you as you read about Elisha's miracles.

Day 3

2 Kings 5. When Yeshua began His ministry in Galilee, He performed miracles of healing. Many people came to Him from the surrounding regions. Just as, in a previous generation, the people heard about Elisha, so others heard what Yeshua was doing. Was He a Prophet like Elisha? Many may have thought so and called to mind the Scriptures that we are reading here. When Elisha instructed Naaman to bathe in the Jordan it was a Messianic sign. God, who healed Naaman of leprosy, came to earth in Yeshua and healed many more lepers. Note how important it was for faith and obedience to work together. Naaman bathed seven times and was healed, but it was not a formula. A man born blind was ordered by Yeshua to bathe in the Pool of Siloam, and he was healed. A different action was needed to enable faith and obedience to work together in the healing. Elisha, through his miracles, prepared the way for Yeshua. Yeshua was first recognized as a Prophet like Elisha, who drew the people together to hear His teaching, so that they might then discover that He was more than a Prophet – He is the Son of God.

Note how important it is for God’s ministers to be obedient. The leprosy of Gehazi warns us that the witness of our lives is as important as the miracles God may perform through us.

Chapter 6. Each of God’s miracles is for a purpose. The floating axe-head shows how God helped one of the Prophets to keep the Torah. He had borrowed the axe and was responsible for it. When he dropped it in the water, he probably had no way to repay the man from whom he borrowed it. God helped him, when he needed help. Take careful note of these miracles. The Holy Spirit will use them from time to time to remind us of the ways of God in our own lives, encouraging us in times of need.

God also used Elisha to deliver the City of Samaria from the Syrians. He allowed Elisha and his servant to see the armies of Angels that were sent to help. Whatever the circumstances on earth, God has resources to help in time of need. There have been other stories like this throughout history. Modern-day Israel has often had miraculous help from God. There are other accounts, like the “Angels of Mons”. During this terrible battle of the First World War, soldiers saw an army of angels on white horses on the hills nearby. This account was recorded in the military records of the time. There have also been other deliverances through history, for nations who sought to follow the principles of the Bible. In times of need, God sends His Angels to minister to people who seek to follow Him. There are battles on earth and there are also spiritual battles. The Books of Daniel and Revelation teach us this. We must remember what God did for Israel through Elisha. This will be necessary in the days ahead. Unfortunately, the leaders of nations are all becoming like those who did not believe in the provision of God at the time of Elisha.

Chapter 7. God was faithful to His Word and delivered Samaria from the invading Syrians just as He said He would. The king's officer, who did not believe, suffered the fate that Elisha prophesied. What is God teaching us through this?

Chapter 8. If we study these accounts prayerfully and carefully, we cannot fail to find symbolism having ongoing relevance. A famine came upon Israel for seven years. In the end times there will be a famine of the Word of God as well as other great troubles on this earth. A special time of seven years has been appointed for the end-time purposes of God. This was prophesied by Daniel. We are also reminded of seven years of famine at the time of Joseph, when God was working out other purposes. The famine at the time of Elisha was as real as was the famine in Egypt. We must carefully study these historical records. Also we must listen to God for what He says to us for the present time. Note how the poor woman was instructed by Elisha. God prepared a place for her to take her son. She obeyed and was cared for. We too must learn to listen to God and follow His instructions. We cannot guess how He will provide for His people, so we must listen and obey. Just as the Shunammite woman did.

Elisha's powerful prophetic ministry extended to Syria as well as Israel, and all he said came to pass.

In this Chapter we also read about the reign of Jehoram in Judah. He was also called Joram for short. Joram was a sinful king and Judah suffered at the hand of the Edomites. Yet, God never forgot His promise to Judah despite all this.

Events in Israel and Judah overlapped at this time, with two wicked kings on the throne. Jehoshaphat had married a relative of Ahab and this now became a snare to Judah. After Joram came Ahaziah, a relative of the King of Israel. This king of Israel, was also named Jehoram, or Joram, but was not the same Joram who had been King of Judah. Both Ahaziah and Joram, the king of Israel, were like wicked Ahab. They fought together against Syria, and Joram was wounded.

Day 4

2 Kings 9-10. This was a turbulent time in both Israel and Judah. God appointed Jehu, a descendant of Jehoshaphat (a different Jehosaphat from Judah's earlier king), to rule over Israel and to bring judgment on the line of Ahab. In these chapters, we read how the wickedness of the family of Ahab was cut off. Jezebel met her prophesied death, and so did all the sons of Ahab. Ahaziah, of Judah, who had been as wicked as Ahab, was also killed, along with his 42 brothers. In addition, Jehu tricked the prophets of baal so that baal worship was cut off. God was cleansing Israel. Nevertheless, in time, despite being responsible for this great deliverance, Jehu himself turned away from God. After his death Israel's enemies began to cut off parts of the nation. The decline of the nation continued.

Chapter 11. In the south, Athaliah usurped the throne for six years. She was not God's choice but He allowed this to happen while Joash was hidden away. Israel now had a queen! In the seventh year Joash was proclaimed King. Israel suffered under Athaliah and the people were now ready to recommit themselves to God, remembering the Covenant their forefathers had made. A better era was about to begin. First, Athaliah was killed and the temples of baal were torn down.

2 Chronicles 21 to 23. This is the parallel reading from the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah bringing us to the time when Jehoash became King.

Day 5

2 Kings 12 and 2 Chronicles 24. This is the account of Jehoash, also called Joash. He was hidden as a child and protected by Jehoida the Priest. Then he was proclaimed King at the age of 7 years, and wise Jehoida counseled him well. It was a wonderful period for Judah, when Priest and King worked together. The kingdom was restored to God. Memory of Moses was strong when a box was put out for offerings to repair the Temple. It was comparable to the time when the Tabernacle was built with free-will offerings. The importance of the need for wise elder statesmen to advise rulers of nations is emphasized. While Jehoida lived, Joash was a good king, but when Jehoida died Joash fell into apostasy. For a brief moment Judah had been restored, but the nation fell again to worshipping foreign gods soon afterwards. Thereby, they removed themselves from God's protection.

2 Kings 13. The account moves north to Israel to describe the tide of events under King Jehoahaz. The theme continues: God listened to repentant prayer, but allowed Israel's enemies to prevail when the nation followed other gods. Israel's king after Jehoahaz was Jehoash, also called Joash, the same as the king in Judah had been called. We must not confuse the two. The King of Israel was wicked just as Jeroboam had been. Elisha died. His last prophetic act was to pronounce judgment on Israel. Joash showed himself to be a weak king through the prophetic action of striking the ground with arrows in a non-committal way. It came to pass just as Elisha said, in Israel's war with Syria.

Day 6

2 Chronicles 25. While Joash was King in Israel, Amaziah became King in Judah. He observed the Laws of Moses but lacked zeal, so that the high places were not removed. Like others before him, he turned away from the Lord towards the end. Joash, King of Israel, defeated Amaziah at Beth Shemesh, which is to the south of Jerusalem. These were days of weakness in both Israel and Judah. Long gone were the days of David and Solomon.

2 Kings 14. This is the parallel account of Amaziah and also of Jeroboam 2nd, King of Israel. Jeroboam did not follow the ways of God, but, nevertheless, God was compassionate with the people of Israel during his reign, always remembering His Covenant.

2 Kings 15 and 16. The brief accounts of the kings of Israel and Judah continue. Read them carefully and note the details. One king after another is judged on how well he followed the ways of God. The kings of Israel constantly failed from the time of Jeroboam. The grace of God, nevertheless, was evident in a number of ways. God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and had His long term plan in view. He was always merciful when He found repentance, despite terrible apostasy that typified the nation most of the time. He always had His eyes on the poor and needy. In these chapters we read about King Azariah of Judah, who was also called Uzziah. Again, in Judah, there was a king who went a long way towards doing what was right in the sight of God but, nevertheless, falling short by not removing the high places. The history of both Israel and Judah reached a significant time during the reign of these kings.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

The period between Rehoboam and Uzziah was a little less than 200 years. Uzziah became King of Judah around 785 BC. It is hard for us to put this period of time in perspective, when the accounts are so brief and full of historical facts. It is also hard for us to imagine life in those days. They were hard days with much warfare but they were also days when ordinary people pursued their lives the best they could. There was a farming community with its regular cycles. They lived simple lives, much the same as we find in some farming communities in the world today. Try to gain a perspective of this as you think about your own country's history over 200 years. Some nations in the world today remind us of ancient Israel. This will help us to understand biblical history. God watched over Israel and Judah, with a long term plan in mind to fulfill His Covenant promises. He would neither compromise His promises nor the instructions that were given through Moses. If this is the case for Israel and Judah, a specially chosen people, how do we appraise the situations in our nations today?

God sent Prophets to warn the leaders of the nations. He showed immense patience. He gave time for both Israel and Judah to consider their ways. Now we come to a climax for both Israel and Judah.

Around 722 BC, Shalmaneser led the Assyrians to defeat Israel. God's judgment had fallen and the ten northern Tribes were exiled. They have been dispersed among the nations since that day. At around the same time, strong Prophetic Words began to be spoken in Judah. Isaiah began to prophesy at this time.

2 Kings 17. Read the sad account of when Israel was taken into captivity, and reflect on the reason for this.
