

Bible Study # 25
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Old Testament Series—I Kings 12—22, II Kings
1—2, II Chronicles 10—20
(Chart at end)

I have another sheet that I will pass out to you that I think will also aid in the material that we are covering this evening. We are continuing our Bible study, our historical survey of the Old Testament. We are completing the first book of Kings. The handout we are passing out is a chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel. We are getting more into the historical section with the completing of the book of I Kings and **going into quite a bit of detail on the history of many of the kings of Israel and Judah in the aftermath of King Solomon's death.** I think this particular chart will be of help to you.

If you will notice, this chart covers approximately a five hundred-year period. It begins at the time of King David and comes down through David and his son, Solomon. We spent several Bible studies going through the material about Saul and David and then the last time on Solomon. We note that in some of these areas, God spends a lot of time. There are a lot of details that are given on the lives of certain individuals, and then as we come down, speed picks up. God devotes a lot less space and attention to certain of these individuals. We are going to cover some of this tonight.

The date 922 B.C. was a significant date because that date reflected the death of King Solomon and the division of the kingdom. Israel, of course, was twelve tribes. They had been united under the kingship of Saul who was the first king. And then we have the death of Saul. If you remember, there was a temporary split in the kingdom because the northern ten tribes clung to the dynasty of Saul for a period of seven years. They went along for a while under the dynasty of Saul. Judah recognized David as king. He had been the one who had been anointed king by Samuel at an earlier time. Judah recognized David as king while the northern tribes recognized the dynasty of Saul. This continued along for about seven years then there was reconciliation after the assassination of Saul's son by some of his servants. The ten tribes sent emissaries down to David and said, 'Look, we would like to reunite the kingdom. We would like for you to be king over all of us.'

So the entire twelve tribes were reunited under David. David reigned forty years. We went through the ups and downs of his life and many of the lessons that God would have us to draw from that. We saw that at the time of David's death, God chose David's son Solomon to sit on his father's throne. Solomon inherited that throne. God made a covenant with David, a covenant of a perpetual kingship. God made a promise to David that if his descendants did not obey Him and did not follow the covenant that God had made, He would deal with them. He would punish them. God would punish them with the rod of men, but God would not deal with them as He dealt with Saul and remove His mercy from him. So there was a distinction. God said He would not take away the kingship from David's dynasty. God had made a promise; 'I have made a covenant with you, but on the other hand, I will punish them if they do not obey.' God would deal with them. God admonished Solomon. Solomon, of course, in his later years got into a variety of problems. Solomon's "chickens came home to roost," so to speak.

We pick up the story this evening with the death of Solomon. Solomon's son Rehoboam is to be the next king. Now, what we find is that what Solomon sowed was reaped by his son. It's important to realize that what we do can certainly have implications, not only for us, but also for those who come after us.

I Kings 11:42-43, "And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years, and he slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place."

I Kings 12:1, "Rehoboam went up to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king."

Now there was a man with whom Solomon had trouble. He was a servant of Solomon, had gotten into problems and had proved to be a "thorn in the side," as far as Solomon was concerned. His name was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He had been exiled to Egypt (vv. 2-3). When he heard about the death of Solomon, he decided he was going to come back. He was going to come in and, in effect, run for election. He was going to try to get in on the action. He knew that Solomon had control over things that he could not overthrow; but now there was a period of transition, and Jeroboam was going to come back and see what he could "stir up."

Verses 4-5, "'Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on

us, and we will serve you.’ So he said to them, ‘Depart for three days, then come back to me.’ And the people departed.”

What you had here was the same thing that people have been griping about ever since. If you heard the news, it’s what they were griping about in the legislature today—and that’s taxes. People have been complaining about high taxes. You remember when the people requested a king? Remember we went through that in I Samuel 8. When the people requested a king and Samuel was upset, God said, ‘Look, Samuel, give them what they have asked for. They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me. But you tell them what it’s going to be like to have human government.’

Remember Samuel told them three things that they were going to complain about. He said, ‘Look, you are going to complain about the taxes because the first thing he is going to do is lay on a heavy levy. He is going to start taxing you, and it is going to increase. So you are going to gripe about the taxes. He’s going to institute the draft and have big armies and military spending, and he’s going to draft your sons to be soldiers. You are going to complain about that. Thirdly, he’s going to establish this great big bureaucracy, and he’s going to have all these people, this giant court, that’s going to be big government. You are going to complain about that.’

God said, ‘When you complain, I’m not going to listen because I’ve already told you this is what you’re getting into.’ And the people said, ‘No, we want a king so that we can be like all the nations.’ They wanted to be just like everybody else.

Of course, nobody today has ever said that. You’ve never heard any of your children say that, have you? ‘Why, everybody has one; everybody does it. Why can’t we be just like everybody else?’ That’s what Israel said. There’s nothing new under the sun. It’s the same old excuses that have probably run back since the Garden of Eden. There’s nothing new. That’s what Israel said, ‘Oh, we want to be just like all the nations.’ So the result of it was that God gave them a king.

It started out where Saul instituted taxes. They increased and increased, and by the time of Solomon’s death, the taxes were high. What you have here is the original tax revolt. They came and demanded lower taxes—Proposition 13 or whatever you want to call it. They were going to have lower taxes.

Verse 6, “Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon

while he still lived, and he said, ‘How do you advise me to answer these people?’” Rehoboam consulted with the old men that had been advisors to his father.

Verse 7, “And they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’” They told him, ‘Look, you are young; you are just coming into power. What you’d better do is show yourself reasonable. They have a reasonable request. You’d better show yourself reasonable; be easy with them. You’ll find that if you give in to them on this, later on they’ll give in to you on other things. This is a reasonable request, and one that you had better accede to.’

But Rehoboam didn’t like what they told him. How many times people want their own way; they want to hear what they want to hear. He had originally talked to these older and wiser men who had a lot of experience, and they gave him some good advice. Because they didn’t tell him what he wanted to hear, what did he do?

I Kings 12:8-11, “But he rejected the counsel which the elders gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. And he said to them, ‘What counsel do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, “Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?”’ Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, ‘Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, “Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us”—thus you shall say to them: “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s waist! And now, whereas my father laid a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges [scorpions]!”’”

He went and hunted up his buddies, the young men who had grown up with him, his old drinking buddies, his old, old buddies. ‘Hey, what do you guys think I should do?’ Well, they told him exactly what he wanted to hear. They said, ‘Man, you go out there and tell those guys, “My father chastened you with whips, but I am going to chasten you with scorpions. You think you had it rough under him. You want your taxes lowered; I’m going to raise them. I’m going to really “put it to you.” You’d better not mess with me; I’m tough. I’m in charge around here.”’

All you need is somebody who is young and immature to really be insecure, and he has to go around and prove to everybody that he’s in charge. Ever notice that? It happens maybe even

in a job. You're working under somebody; he's some fresh young guy just out of school, and he's never worked on the job before. But he knows it all because they taught it to him where he went to school. If you don't think he's in charge, just give him a chance to tell you because he wants to make sure everybody knows that he's the boss and he's in charge. This is often a problem of those who lack certain maturity, a certain seasoning, a certain experience because they really don't have that security and experience in what they know and in their authority. They feel like they have to prove something to everyone. Every time someone makes a suggestion, they take it as a challenge, and they have something to prove.

Well, this was Rehoboam's problem. He got all of his young buddies, and they agreed with him. The people had a very simple answer.

Verse 16, "Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: 'What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!' So Israel departed to their tents." All of a sudden, instead of ruling over twelve tribes, he was ruling over two. If it hadn't been for God's mercy, he wouldn't have had those either. God makes it plain that it was because of His promise to King David, grandfather of Rehoboam. God in His mercy caused it to work out where Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, the house of David because that was the territory where Jerusalem was located. They weren't loyal so much to Rehoboam as they were loyal to the memory and the dynasty of David.

Verses 20-21, "Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only...."

It's interesting how the more things change, the more they remain the same. Ever stop to think that basically this nation started out with the thirteen colonies. What did they do? They rebelled against the House of David over the issue of high taxes, the same old thing. It's interesting. From the time that Israel rebelled against the House of David and established their independence, they lasted as a nation just over two hundred years. The time of the rebellion was 922 B.C. The time of the captivity was 721 B.C. So it was approximately two hundred years.

Interesting! Doesn't particularly prove anything, but it makes an interesting parallel.

Jeroboam immediately wanted to consolidate his rule in the ten tribes. What did he start out by doing? He used human reasoning. What did he think was going to ensure his control? He started thinking, 'Now, if the people go down to God's temple in Jerusalem every year for the Feast and for various Festivals, after a while, they are going to get nostalgic for the House of David. They are going to start thinking about those things and are going to get over being mad at Rehoboam. They are going to go to Jerusalem three times a year for the Festivals, and chances are, they are going to get rid of me' (vv. 26-27). This was his reasoning.

'What I need to do to secure my throne is to make a break with the religion.'

So being the man of the people that he was, he said, 'Now look, you folks have had it rough. I am the reform candidate.' Ever notice, everybody that comes along, they are always the reform candidate. Everybody is going to make it better than those crooks before them. I don't care which crook gets elected; he is always going to be better than his predecessor. Nobody ever promises, 'I am going to make it worse. You elect me and I am going to make it worse. You think the guys before me messed it up; just elect me and I am going to have this thing so fouled up it's going to take twenty years to get it straightened out.' Nobody ever says that. We have some that do it over the course of time; I think that is just obvious.

Jeroboam comes alone and says, 'It's been too rough on you. You've had to go all the way to Jerusalem to worship God. You don't have to do that. I am going to build two temples. We are not just going to have one like they have in Jerusalem. We are going to have one at Dan in the north and one at Bethel in the south—just take your choice' (vv. 28-29). 'And we are going to put two golden calves, one in the north and one in the south, so you can see what you're worshiping. These are your gods' (v. 28).

Remember the golden calf (Exodus 32)? That's what brought them up out of Egypt, right? Really smart! And then he decided he needed a priesthood that he could control because the priests, the Levites, were educated. They were skilled in the law of God, and they weren't going to put up with this stuff. He couldn't control them. They weren't beholden to him. What did he do? He decided he would fire all of God's true ministry, get rid of the priests and the

Levites, and would hire the lowest of the people (v. 31).

I Kings 12:28-31, “Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one in Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.”

He didn’t want the Levites who were educated in the law of God and understood God’s way. He went out and hired the people who couldn’t get a job doing anything else, the least educated. They were the ones who were the least capable of being hired, and they preached whatever he wanted them to. He hired them; he could fire them. They didn’t know a whole lot, one way or the other. They were glad to preach whatever the “doctrine of the moment” was. They would be glad to preach it. They would preach anything for a price.

Now notice what Jeroboam did next.

Verse 32, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like unto the Feast which is in Judah....”

Now I want to ask you something. Have you noticed anything last night and tonight? It’s a full moon. It’s exactly one month since the Feast. You know what this means? This would be the beginning of Jeroboam’s feast. You know when that would climax, when it would end? A few days right after the weekend when we have an occasion coming up called Halloween.

Now let me ask you something. You know what the word “October” means? Any school kid learned what the word “October” means; it means “eighth.” The word “octopus” refers to “eight arms.” “October” means “eighth month”; “November” means “ninth month”; and “December,” “tenth month.” This should tell people something because they count December as being the twelfth month, not the tenth month. That tells you the year didn’t originally end in December. March was the beginning of the year. The year began in the spring, even on the old Roman calendar. And the months were numbered September—the seventh, January—the eleventh, and February—the twelfth. Then they moved the year ending back two months, but they kept the same names. Let people scratch their heads and try to figure that one out.

Where did Halloween come from? Where did it originate? It originated with the Druids, with the Celts in Northwestern Europe. Who were those people? They were the descendants of the House of Israel. What do we find them observing when they got to Northwestern Europe? We find them observing Jeroboam’s feast in the eighth month. What does it focus on? It is a time of emphasis on graves being opened up, all of these things coming up out of the graves—nothing but a satanic counterfeit. It’s a Satan-inspired counterfeit of the Last Great Day and the events connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s the remnant of Jeroboam’s feast of the eighth month. People go right along.

People want to know if Halloween is mentioned in the Bible. Yes, right here—Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month. Just because something is mentioned in the Bible doesn’t mean the Bible approves of it. It mentions idolatry in the Bible. It mentions a lot of things in the Bible. Jeroboam introduced his own version, a new and improved version. It was *not* a new and improved version.

One thing Jeroboam did not grasp, and all the would-be dynasty builders of Northern Israel never grasped, was the lesson of Psalm 127.

Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house, the weary builders toil in vain....” Jeroboam tried to build his own house and tried to establish his own dynasty; it collapsed. It came to an end within a couple of generations.

Saul tried to establish his own house. He was going to wipe out the opposition; he was going to establish his own dynasty—and God ended it.

David set out to build a house for God, not something for himself. God told David, ‘Because you have some sins, some things you have done, I am not going to let you build a house for Me. Your hands are stained with blood; I have forgiven you, but there are certain physical penalties that you are going to have to pay. I am not going to allow you that privilege of building a house for Me, I am going to let your son do that. But I tell you what I am going to do because I see your heart and your attitude. You want to build something for Me; I’m going to build something for you. You want to build a house for Me; I am going to build a house for you—a dynasty. I will establish it and it is going to endure forever.’ And so we see that. God established David’s dynasty.

I Kings 13 is a very crucial chapter. It is the account of God sending a prophet to Jeroboam to warn Jeroboam of what is going to happen. God

worked a miracle through this individual as a warning to Jeroboam of the seriousness of what he was doing in departing from God. Of course, Jeroboam did not learn the lesson and refused to heed it and went on his way.

Notice the chart. It comes down from David to Solomon and Rehoboam. You see the parallel picking up with Israel, Jeroboam. We find that Jeroboam's dynasty was only Jeroboam and his son, Nadab. Nadab was overthrown and another dynasty, Baasha and his son Elah came in. They didn't last but a few years; then in a very, very quick overthrow, a matter of days, Zimri launched himself as king. He was in turn overthrown by Omri who set up one of the great dynasties or one of the most enduring dynasties of Northern Israel. Ahab, Omri's son is perhaps the most famous. Now Omri founded the most significant dynasty of Northern Israel.

We are coming down to the parallel of that. Rehoboam was succeeded by his son Abijah for just a short time, and his grandson Asa ruled for a number of years. Then Asa's son Jehoshaphat was a king that ruled for a lengthy period. That corresponded with some of the time of Omri and Ahab. This gives us the parallels.

If you will notice opposite that, you will find that this was the time of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah came on the scene about the time that Jehoshaphat ruled and Omri became king in Israel. Elijah was God's prophet for a number of years. Elijah came on the scene perhaps fifty or sixty years after the split in the kingdom. Elijah came into prominence as God's prophet, probably about fifty or sixty years after the death of King Solomon. We see him and then later Elisha, whose ministry continued on for a period of time. We are not going to go any further this evening than around the time of Jehoshaphat and Ahab.

So you can kind of get a picture of it, I'd like to make a few comments about Omri. Omri founded the most significant dynasty in Northern Israel. His son Ahab intermarried with the Phoenicians and introduced Baal worship into Israel and indirectly into Judah. One of the children of Ahab and Jezebel intermarried with the royal line of Judah. We will note some of the problems that came in a little bit later with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. We'll notice that in the next Bible study.

Now Omri built Samaria. Samaria became the capital city of Northern Israel and is identified throughout the rest of Scriptures and prophecy as the symbol of the northern kingdom. Omri built that, and Israel achieved a certain prominence

during the reign of Omri. Omri achieved such fame that the nation of Israel actually came to be called by his name.

I want to quote to you from Langer's Encyclopedia of World History: "The Assyrians called Israel after his name Khumri." "Bathomri"—"Bath" means "house." The House of Omri is the name that came to refer to the nation of Israel. Now that is very significant because the name in Assyrian would be spelled Khumri and the Assyrians continued to use this name for Israel. This is the name that Israel carried into captivity as far as the Assyrians were concerned. This is the name that the Assyrians used for them.

History of France, Vol. I (a detailed history from the earliest years) makes the statement that the Kymrians, also spelled Cimmerians, migrated into Europe from the area of the Black Sea during the period of about 700 B.C. to about 300 B.C. Now the area of the Black Sea is the area where the Assyrians took the Israelites when they took them into captivity. They took the northern tribes into captivity in 721 B.C. They settled them up in the area between the Black and Caspian Sea.

Volume I of the History of France states that shortly after that, the Cimmerians or Kymrians (which was the Assyrian name for Israel, going back to Omri) began to migrate into Europe from the area of the Black Sea about 700 B.C. The bulk of them came in about 300 B.C. We will go into some more of that in a later Bible study, but it interesting that here's where that name came from and why it came to be applied to Israel.

Interestingly enough, as I was mentioning earlier on Halloween, that's the people you find celebrating Halloween, the festival that is a continuation of the pagan religion that Jeroboam had introduced.

We are also going to get into some things on Elijah this evening. Elijah was raised up by God to do a work of restoring the true religion in Israel. Elijah was raised up, primarily, as God's prophet to Northern Israel fifty or sixty years after the split as things began to deteriorate. Several generations went by; actually, you had the third generation by the time of Elijah. There were elderly people alive who remembered the time of Solomon and all of that, but the generation who had any firsthand knowledge, memory of the temple of Solomon and the teachings of true religion, would have been people certainly into their seventies and eighties by the time Elijah came onto the scene. We are looking at a generation that was beginning to

pass from the scene, and everyone younger than that really didn't have firsthand knowledge. So the nation had gotten further and further away from the knowledge of the truth; more and more paganism began to come in.

God raised up Elijah to do a work of restoring the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. Elijah stands out as the greatest of the prophets. We notice that he founded three schools or colleges. They were schools of the prophets to train his disciples. You can show, as well, that he visited and counseled with kings and world leaders. He was completely uncompromising in his obedience to God. We are told that he was to be a type of the one who would come prior to the coming of the Messiah, one who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. John the Baptist did that before the first coming of Christ.

We saw here in I Kings that Jeroboam got rid of the priesthood of God and sought to replace them with his own priesthood. Let's notice the parallel account back in II Chronicles 11.

II Chronicles 11:13-15, "And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him. For the Levites left their common lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the Lord. Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made." All the priests and Levites left Northern Israel and came down to Rehoboam in Jerusalem.

There is one thing I would like to call your attention to here in II Chronicles 11. We went through the story of Solomon's life last time. Solomon is a tremendous example when it comes to the fact of how much more your example counts than your advice. Solomon gave excellent advice. The book of Proverbs is basically the advice that Solomon gave to his son. That's the way it starts out.

Proverbs 1:1, 8, "The proverbs of Solomon... 'My son, hear the instruction of your father.'" Have you ever thought about that? Proverbs is what Solomon wrote to Rehoboam. He gave him advice on how to be wise. Did Rehoboam follow any of it? No. There's a lot of advice that Solomon gave Rehoboam in the book of Proverbs about avoiding immorality. Notice here what we are told about Rehoboam.

II Chronicles 11:21, "Now Rehoboam loved Maachah the granddaughter of Absalom more than all his wives and his concubines; for he took

eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and begot twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters."

Verse 23 (KJV), "...and he desired many wives." He had a bunch and wanted more. Would you say that he followed his father's example? He just wasn't rich enough to do it on as grand a scale as old Dad. He did the best he could; he tried. Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Rehoboam couldn't begin to measure up to that, but he desired many. He regretted he had to stop where he did; he just ran out of money. What was the consequence to Rehoboam? What kind of shape did Rehoboam wind up in? Solomon gave Rehoboam some excellent advice; but Rehoboam didn't follow Solomon's advice—he followed his example.

That should be an important lesson to all of us as parents. I don't care how good your advice is; your example is going to carry a lot more weight. We might as well learn that and "chalk it up," whether we like it or dislike it. It's a fact of life that our example is going to have a lot more impact than our advice.

As we continue on the main story thread, we come down to I Kings 14.

I Kings 14:1-2, "At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, 'Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I would be king over this people.'" Jeroboam was very concerned, and we find that, interestingly enough, Jeroboam sent his wife to a prophet of God. He didn't send her to one of the priests of the high places. When he wanted some accurate information, he went to one of God's servants.

Verse 4, "And Jeroboam's wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of age." Ahijah was very elderly by this time. He very likely had some kind of cataracts or something of that sort. God revealed to him who was coming. Ahijah told her that this son would die; he explained what was going to happen as a result of Jeroboam's sin (vv. 7-16).

Verse 20, "The period that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place."

Verses 22-24, "Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also had built for themselves high places, sacred pillars,

and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons [KJV, "sodomites"] in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." We find that Rehoboam wasn't a particularly good king either because he allowed Judah to build high places.

Verses 25-26, "Now it happened, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made."

Verse 30, "And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days." Most people today, if they saw the headlines of Judah and Israel going to war, wouldn't know what that meant. They would think that was a contradiction of terms. How could the Jews be fighting Israel? Well, that's what happened. Jews only refer to the tribe of Judah, the area where Rehoboam ruled. Israel referred to the ten tribes.

In v. 31, Rehoboam died. He died prior to Jeroboam; he died during Jeroboam's eighteenth year.

I Kings 15:1-3, "Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David." His son Abijam reigned three years, and he did all the bad things that his father had done.

Verses 4-5, "Nevertheless for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." God was still merciful because of David's sake. David had done that which was right.

Verse 8, "So Abijam rested with his fathers ...then Asa his son reigned in his place."

Verse 9, "In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah."

Verse 11, "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David." Asa did a lot of good things.

Verse 12, "And he banished the perverted persons [sodomites] from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made." Asa was a young man during the time of Solomon's last years. He remembered Solomon. He had seen the mess that his father and grandfather had made. Evidently Solomon had learned certain lessons during the final time of his life that are written in the book of Ecclesiastes. Asa had, perhaps, been impressed with some of those things and had seen certain results, learned certain lessons, and now he begins to turn things around.

The first thing he does is to get rid of the sodomites, to stamp out the immorality in the land and to remove the idols. He removed his grandmother (who was queen mother) from office because she had made an idol in the grove (v. 13), and he destroyed her idol.

Verse 14, "...Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days." He had, basically, a good attitude toward God.

Verse 16, "Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days." There was continual strife between Asa and the king of Israel who had succeeded the house of Jeroboam.

II Chronicles 14:2-7, "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him. And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest. Therefore he said to Judah, 'Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side.' So they built and prospered." They built up and fortified the cities and increased the army.

Verses 8-9, "And Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor. Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah." The Ethiopians came with this gigantic army. Asa had built up this great army,

but when he saw how heavily outnumbered he was, he cried out to God.

Verses 11-12, “And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said, ‘Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!’ So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.” God intervened and smote the Ethiopians, and Asa won the battle.

Now we find that Asa had some problems. There are lessons that can be learned.

II Chronicles 16:1-3 “In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king’s house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, ‘Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. Here, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.’”

Primarily, Asa’s problems revolved around the issue of faith. Asa had a good attitude; he wanted to obey God, and he made a number of reforms in the land. But Asa lacked faith.

When the king of Israel was going to come up against Judah, he built up a fortified area that was going to control entrance and access right on the main highway, the main trade route coming into Judah. Ramah was kind of a Berlin Wall of that day, a “checkpoint Charlie”—everybody had to come through this fortified stronghold that he had made in order to get out or come in. Asa became nervous and worried about that. Instead of going to God the way he had earlier when the Ethiopians had invaded, he got silver and gold out of the treasury of the Lord’s house and decided to cut a deal with the king of Syria. He got scared and compromised. He got this money out of the temple because that was the only quick access to cash that he had. He thought he’d take this money and pay off the king of Syria. He would get him to make a league with him, and they would “gang up” on the king of Israel.

God sent His servant, a prophet, Hanani, to Asa.

Verse 7, “And at that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: ‘Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your

hand.’” God sent his servant, a prophet, Hanani to Asa and said, ‘Because you relied on the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord your God, this thing is not going to profit you. You are going to find that the king of Syria is going to turn out to be your enemy, too.’

Verse 9, “‘For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.’” You didn’t trust God. You took it upon yourself to solve it your own way. You looted the money out of the temple treasury and hired allies. You are just going to have a mess.

Verse 10, “Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.” Asa got mad. He didn’t like to be corrected; he didn’t like to being told he was wrong. It made him so mad that he threw the prophet in jail and began to be harsh to some of the people. He resented being corrected. Isn’t that human nature? He was going along fine, but now he lacks faith and does something he shouldn’t have done. God sent His ministry, His prophet to correct him, and Asa resented it. He got mad.

Verse 12, “And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was very severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians.” Then Asa got sick; he was diseased in his feet. He didn’t seek the Lord, but he went to the physician.

It would have been kind of embarrassing (the prophet had been rotting in jail for a year or two now) to bring him out and ask him to pray for him so that God would heal him. ‘I’ll show him; I don’t have to ask God to heal me. I’ll just go to the doctor, and that will take care of it.’

Verse 13 simply says, “So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign.” Asa died; that was the end result. Who showed who? He was going to do it his way.

I think we see that Asa had some positive points; he got rid of the sodomites, tore down the idolatrous groves and even removed his grandmother from being queen. He built up the fenced cities of Judah. Judah prospered during his reign. Asa’s basic attitude was that he wanted to do what was right. But Asa had a problem. His problem was one that all of us encounter from time to time—and that is a lack of faith. And Asa compounded his problem of a lack of faith. When he was corrected over something that he did, under the temptation and weakness of the

moment, instead of really repenting, he got mad. Since he resented being corrected, he compounded his problem. He got further away from God than ever. When he got sick, he didn't call on God and God didn't heal him. He called on the doctor and he died. That's the story of Asa. There are lessons to learn.

In I Kings 16, we go back to the main story flow we are following.

I Kings 16:16, "...So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp."

Verses 23-26, "In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah. And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill. Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols."

Omri did various things and was responsible for having built the capital city of Samaria, but he continued to disobey God. You can follow down in the chart to keep straight who was king over which group. We have Omri king over Israel, and when Omri died, his son became king.

Verses 28-31, "So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab his son reigned in his place. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him."

Ahab came along and had the distinction of making Jeroboam look good. You think you have somebody bad until you have somebody worse come along; then all of a sudden, it makes the predecessor look pretty good. 'Oh, for the "good old days"—it wasn't as bad as I thought it was.'

The best thing Ahab ever did was what Jeroboam did, and he went downhill from there. Bad enough, but he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of one of the Phoenicians. You

remember Jezebel? She's quite well known. You can read about Jezebel all through the rest of the Bible. She's become a symbol of everything God hates. If you could take everything God hates in a woman and wrap it up in one person, you would have Jezebel. There are several men that you come across who are described as everything God hates in a man. Jezebel stands out as a really exceptional case.

I Kings 17:1, "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.'" About this time, Elijah shows up and comes to Ahab. He says, 'It's not going to rain anymore. God is going to shut off the spigot.' So Elijah left.

Verses 2-4, "Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.'" "

Verses 6-7, "The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land."

Verses 9-11, "'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.' And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'" He said, 'I am hungry; would you bring me a little piece of bread—bring me something to eat.'

Verse 12, "Then she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.'" She said, 'I don't have anything cooked; all I have is a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in a cruse. I am gathering up these two sticks, and I am going to go and make one little cake, a piece of fried bread, kind of like a piece of hot water bread or something. I am going to make that, and my son and I are going to eat it. Then we are going to die because we don't have anything else to eat. There's no food to be found, and we don't have any way of getting any food.'

Verse 13, “And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.’” Elijah said, ‘Don’t be afraid. Do what you were planning to do, but before you and your son eat, before you make up what you have for him, pinch off a little bit and make some for me. Bring it to me and then feed your son and yourself.’ Now here’s an example of faith. She didn’t look at him and say, ‘You’re crazy, why should I feed you?’

Verse 14, “‘For thus says the Lord God of Israel: “The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’”” Wonder if she believed him?

Verses 15-16, “So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.” That barrel just always had meal in it. You couldn’t scrape the last bit out no matter how much you took out. No matter how much oil you poured out, there was still oil in there.

Verse 17, “Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him.” He was sick to the point of death.

Verse 18, “So she said to Elijah, ‘What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?’” ‘Have you come here, and is God going to visit all my sins on me now?’ In her anguish, it looked like her son was dead.

Verse 19, “And he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed.” He carried him up into the loft, a little cubbyhole up on the roof where Elijah slept, laid him on his bed and prayed to God (vv. 19-21).

Verse 22, “Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.” God restored his life.

Verse 24, “Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth.’” God provided for Elijah and used Elijah in working this miracle, sustaining this woman and using that as an example of faith. There’s an example here, there’s a lesson. You put God first and God will supply your needs. God supplied

that woman’s needs because she was willing to put God first, even when all physical evidence said there was no way she was going to come out ahead by giving some of it away. You don’t have enough for yourself; why are you going to give some of it away?

God is the Most High God. He is the Owner of the Universe. He owns heaven and earth. It all belongs to Him. God doesn’t need what we have. It’s for our benefit that God allows us to have a part, and God uses certain things to teach us certain lessons. God could have fed Elijah some other way. It wasn’t that he was dependent on that woman, but He wanted the woman to learn a lesson of faith. She stepped out on faith to trust God, and God provided her needs. God could have provided Elijah’s needs some other way, but He did it for the benefit of the woman and for an example for us that we can learn.

Let’s continue. 1 Kings 18:1-4, “Now it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.’ So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)” Obadiah had risked his own life. Jezebel had launched the inquisition against anybody who was trying to obey God.

Verse 5, “And Ahab had said to Obadiah, ‘Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.’” Ahab and Obadiah were coming out of the city. They were looking for any water to keep the horses and mules alive. It had gotten down to the point there was just nothing. It was drying up.

Verse 6, “So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.”

Verses 7-9, “Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, ‘Is that you, my lord Elijah?’ And he answered him, ‘It is I. Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.”’ Then he said, ‘How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?’”

‘What have I done that you are going to get me into this kind of trouble.’

Verse 10, “As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, “He is not here,” he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you.” Notice what he said. Elijah was a man who was known to the rulers of his day. Ahab went around to all of the kingdoms, every nation and kingdom in the known world, anywhere around there. Ahab sent his servants there to find out if Elijah was there, and they came and took an oath from the king.

Now if Elijah had been unknown to all these people and not traveled and met some of these people, they wouldn't have known who he was. They would have come in there and asked if Elijah was there. They would have said, ‘I don't know; never heard of him. How should I know if he is here; a lot of people come through here. We got people traveling through every day.’ Elijah was known in all of the surrounding kingdoms. He was known to all of the surrounding governments.

Obadiah says, ‘There is no nation or kingdom anywhere around here within traveling distance that Ahab hasn't sent looking for you. Man, has he ever been looking for you! You told him it wasn't going to rain and you left. And it hasn't rained since. He's mad.’

Verse 12, “And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.”

‘All I need is to go tell him that I've found you. If I come back and the Spirit of the Lord has carried you away and you're not here, do you know what he's going to do? Chop my head off! He's going to think I'm pulling a joke on him, and he's not going to think it's very funny. I have feared God from my youth. I have tried to do what was right; please don't get me in trouble.’

Verse 13, “Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid one hundred men of the Lord's prophets, fifty to a cove, and fed them with bread and water?” He said, ‘Don't you know that I am the guy who hid the prophets when Jezebel tried to kill them all?’

Verses 14-15, “And now you say, “Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here,’” and he will kill me.’ Then Elijah said, ‘As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.’” Elijah said, ‘I am not going to get

you in trouble. I'm going to wait, and you go tell him.’

Verses 16-17, “So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘Is it you, O troubler of Israel?’” Ahab said, ‘Are you the guy that caused all this trouble?’ You know what Elijah said?

He looked him in the eye and said, v. 18, “And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals.’” Elijah said, ‘I am not the cause of the problem; you are, buddy. You have forsaken the Commandments of God and gone to follow Baal. I tell you what I want you to do.’

Verse 19, “Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.” He said, ‘I want you to gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel. Get all the prophets of Baal together, all four hundred fifty of them, all these that are Jezebel's “hangers on.” Get your crowd together, get all Israel up to Mount Carmel; I have something.’

Verse 21, “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.” ‘Why are you vacillating, why are you wobbling back and forth?’

Verses 22-26, “Then Elijah said to the people, ‘I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.’ So all the people answered and said, ‘It is well spoken.’ Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.’ So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us!’ But there was no voice; no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made.”

They really “cut up.” They were really “getting down” with it, beating the tambourines, clanging

the gongs, jumping up and down, whooping, hollering and shouting. This commotion lasted all morning.

Verse 27, “And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.’” He was making fun of them. He said, ‘Cry aloud you guys; better speak up. He’s not going to be able to hear you.’ They had been shouting their lungs out all morning. Really whooping it up. Talk about a “tarry meeting.”

They were “tarrying” all morning and weren’t getting anything. ‘Cry loud; he’s god isn’t he? He’s really up there, isn’t he? I know what it is, he’s taking to somebody—he’s on the telephone, and you are just going to have to wait until he finishes his conversation. Or he is pursuing [the New English Bible gives a more literal translation, maybe he had to go to the bathroom] or maybe he took a trip. I know what it is, he is asleep—he’s taking a nap, and you guys better wake him up.’ Well, needless to say, they didn’t appreciate Elijah’s helpful suggestions.

Verse 28, “So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.” They were really worked up. By this time, they were slashing themselves; they fell over and the blood gushed out.

Verses 29-30, “And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.” Elijah told the people, ‘All right, we have had enough of this foolishness. You guys have provided entertainment all day; come over here.’

Verses 31-34, “And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name.’ Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, ‘Fill four water pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.’ Then he said, ‘Do it a second time,’ and they did it a second time; and he said, ‘Do it a third time,’ and they did it a third time.”

They just absolutely soaked and saturated everything.

Verses 36-38, “And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.’ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.” When God sent it, He didn’t light a little match that could hardly light. WHOOSH, it came down out of heaven, this great big burst of fire and absolutely incinerated like a nuclear blast in miniature. Just a blackened crater remained there.

Verse 39, “Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!’” It really “shook them up.”

Verse 40, “And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!’ So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.” Elijah had the prophets of Baal taken out and executed.

Verse 41, “Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’” Elijah told Ahab he’d better get up and get going, get something to eat and leave in a hurry because there is the sound of abundance of rain.

Verse 42, “So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees.” It gives the account of the rain, the cloud that came, and we have the end of the drought (vv. 43-45).

1 Kings 19:1-2, “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.’” Jezebel got upset. All her prophets were killed. She sent out word, ‘I am going to get you; I am going to chop off your head before the sun sets.’

Have you ever noticed the extent to which you can find yourself going from a spiritual high to a spiritual low? Ever had some time when you were really on a “high,” and boy, you have faith

to handle something. Then all of a sudden, something else comes up and you get scared. Where did all your faith go?

Here was Elijah having gone through all of this, and he gets the word Jezebel is after him. He takes off running and gets out there; he is all depressed and upset. He says, 'God, why don't you just let me die. Nothing is going to work out right. I am as good as dead' (v. 4).

God encouraged him and, in fact, sent him down to Damascus to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria (v. 15) and then to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel (v. 16). So God continued to use Elijah. And what is he doing here? He's going to kings and various rulers. He had a very prominent place.

I Kings 21:1-3, "And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' And Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!'"

Naboth had a vineyard and Ahab wanted it. He said he'd like to buy the vineyard, but Naboth said, 'No, I don't want to sell it. It's been in the family for generations—an old family property—I just don't want to sell it.' Ahab said he would give him a better one. 'I will pay you cash or trade you and give you another one.' Naboth said, 'No, I appreciate it, but I don't want to sell. I want to keep it.' So what did Ahab do?

Verse 4, "So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food." This shows Ahab's maturity—like a little spoiled child. Jezebel came in and said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'Naboth won't sell me his vineyard.' She said, 'Is that all the problem? I'll take care of that.' So she wrote a letter and said, 'Let's kill this Naboth character and get rid of him.'—And she did (vv. 5-13). God was very displeased (vv. 18-22).

I'd like to point out something, just as a matter of law in Israel. Israel was different than the Gentile nations around. Israel was never established as an absolute monarchy. Israel was a constitutional monarchy. For instance, the king could not force one of his subjects to sell

property; it was their property. The property came down in the family, and the king didn't have any right to confiscate it, even in payment. If Naboth didn't want to sell the property, it was legal for him to keep it. The king was under certain requirements of law. He was not absolute in the way that was the custom of the Gentile nations around. Jezebel didn't worry about the law, one way or another. But God dealt with her. God sent a message by Elijah and told Ahab that he was responsible for killing Naboth because he had let his wife do it.

Verse 19, "'You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.'"

Verse 21, "'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free.'" He said, 'I'm going to wipe out your family.'

Verse 22, "'I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam...because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.'"

Verse 27, "So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning [KJV, "went softly"]."—Kind of tip toed around for a little while.

Verses 28-29, "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'See how Ahab humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days; but in the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.'" God said, 'Ahab is kind of a wimp, a jerk and a lot of other things, but it really "shook him up." I am not going to "land on him" quite as hard as I told him I would, at least not immediately.' Ahab repented of sorts. It was very apparent, as you read the story, that he was a very weak character, a very weak-willed character. He never had the gall to stand up to do what was right at all.

Verses 23-25, "'And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.' But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedly in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up."

Now we pick up the story of Jehoshaphat, who was the king of Judah at this time.

I Kings 22:2, “Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel.” He was coming down to visit with Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a nice guy, a good king.

Verses 41-42, “Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem...” His reign overlapped Ahab’s reign and down to the reign of Ahab’s son.

Verse 43, “And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord...”

Verse 44, “Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.” They quit all the fighting. He sought to get rid of the sodomites (v. 46).

To pick up a little bit more of the details of Jehoshaphat, turn back to II Chronicles 17.

II Chronicles 17:2-6, “And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel...And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.”

Verses 7-13, “Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethaneel, and Michaish, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zedariah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah—the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. And the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat...So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah. He had much property [KJV, “business”] in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem.”

Jehoshaphat was basically a good king. He followed all the good examples of his father, Asa. He went even further. He got the Levites working to teach the Jews God’s ways and to perform their responsibilities as teachers and

judges. God blessed him greatly. But Jehoshaphat also had a problem. His biggest problem seemed to revolve around getting “tangled up” with Ahab.

II Chronicles 18:1, “Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.” Jehoshaphat was a nice guy, a peaceable sort of guy. He liked to be friends with everybody. He found it difficult to believe bad things about people. ‘Well, you know old Ahab; maybe if I can just kind of hang around old Ahab, I can be a good influence on him and kind of encourage him.’

A lot of Ahab’s problem was that he was weak. He was not as utterly corrupt in the way that Jezebel was. He was just weak; he would never stand up for what he knew was right. He had a certain respect even for God’s prophet. He certainly had a respect for Elijah, even though he didn’t follow through on what he should have done. He was a very weak-willed character.

Jehoshaphat seemed to think he could be a good influence on him. That kind of thing never works out that way. All it did was get Jehoshaphat entangled, and Ahab tried to use and manipulate him.

You have the story here where Ahab had conned Jehoshaphat into coming down and helping him out in a war. Jehoshaphat said, ‘Well, I am ready to go out to battle, but I want to talk to God’s prophet first’ (v. 4).

Verse 5, “Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?’ And they said, ‘Go up, for God will deliver it into the king’s hand.’”

Remember Ahab had called in all these others, prophets of the false god, and they whooped and hollered and put on their little show.

Verse 6, “But Jehoshaphat said, ‘Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?’” ‘Yeah, but I really want to talk to a prophet of God. Don’t you have one around close by?’ Ahab said, ‘Well, we have one, Micaiah the son of Imla, but I don’t like him because he never says anything good to me’ (v. 7).

‘When I call my prophets and tell them I want to do something, they smile and say, “Bless you, my son, go ahead and do it; everything will be okay.” They tell me things I like to hear and make me feel good. It doesn’t matter what I want to do, they are always in favor of it. But this Micaiah, he never has anything good to say. Anything I want to do, he doesn’t like.’

And Jehoshaphat said, 'Please, don't say things like that (v. 7); just go ahead and call him.'

Verse 8, "Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, 'Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly.'"

When the soldier came to get Micaiah he said, 'Look, he's already asked everybody else and everybody's told him what he wanted to hear. Everybody told him to go to battle; now don't come in here and be a spoilsport like you usually do. Tell him what he wants to hear.'

Verses 13-14, "And Micaiah said, 'As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.' Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?' And he said, 'Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!'" Micaiah walked in and said, 'Yeah, king go on down.' The king couldn't believe it. Ahab sat back and said, 'Now, wait a minute; haven't I always told you to tell me the truth' (v. 15)? He had never told him to tell him the truth, but he liked to think that he had. Micaiah looked at him and said, 'All right, I am going to tell you the truth.'

Verse 16, "Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd.' And the Lord said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" Micaiah told the king, 'You are going to go out there to battle all right, but you are going to get killed.' And Ahab turned around to Jehoshaphat and said, 'Didn't I tell you; he never has anything good to say' (v. 17).

Notice what a con man Ahab was and what a gullible sort Jehoshaphat was. He was just a nice guy, the kind of guy that was very easy to get along with. He didn't like to cause trouble. Notice what happened.

Verse 29, "And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.' So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle." Ahab tells Jehoshaphat he is going to disguise himself, just in the off-chance this guy knows what he is talking about and somebody is aiming for him. 'I am going to disguise myself and go to battle. You go ahead and put on your robes, put on your crown; you go out there looking like a king. I am just going to "stick on" some old clothes and go out to battle.'

Jehoshaphat should have wised up to that. 'What does he think? Me, put on my robes and go out there, and he's going to put on some old clothes and go sneaking out there. Who are they going to be shooting at?' But he just found it difficult to

believe anything bad about anybody; he obliged and went out there.

Verse 31, "So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'It is the king of Israel!' Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to turn away from him." Just like old Ahab had figured, they were ready to come down on Jehoshaphat. When he got into trouble, he cried out to God, 'Oh, God, what have I gotten myself into?' And God helped him. God had mercy on him. All these guys left. And sure enough, somebody shoots a bow and what does it do? It hits Ahab (v. 33). So that's the story.

II Chronicles 19:1, "Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem." God told him to "stay put"—don't go back to Israel and get tangled up in that anymore.

In II Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat did many positive things, but he kept having problems getting suckered into deals with Israel.

II Chronicles 20:35, "After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly."

In v. 36, he talked him into a deal. 'Let's go into a partnership and build a navy. We will sail it from your port, Ezion-gaber.' Sure enough, Jehoshaphat probably put up most of the money, provided the port, and who knows what all he got conned into. They built this great big navy and were going to send it out, but God sent a storm and sank the whole navy (v. 37). It wasn't able to make it to Tarshish.

Here's a lesson. Get yourself tangled up with people not trying to obey God, and you are going to have trouble. Jehoshaphat, in his own personal life and in what he personally had responsibility for, was a very faithful man. But he was a "nice guy," found it hard to say "no" to anybody and kept getting suckered in. He felt sorry for the kings of Israel, thinking he could be a good influence on them, and maybe they would "come along." But they kept suckering him in. They kept using him and setting him up for one thing after another.

This is a story that I think is important for us to grasp because there are lessons of life that we can learn from the interaction of people.

Let's just briefly summarize here in the first couple chapters of II Kings which is the end of the story of Elijah, at least at this point.

II Kings 2:1-2, "And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from

Gilgal. Then Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel.' And Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!' So they went down to Bethel."

Verse 3, "And the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha..."

Verse 5, "And the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha..."

What you find as you go through here, this refers to three schools or colleges (if you want to use our modern terminology) for the prophets or sons of the prophets that Elijah had established at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. They were "sons of the prophets" or students of Elijah. God was getting ready to end Elijah's ministry. (His life didn't end until a little later.)

We find mentioned in v. 9, "...Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?' And Elisha said, 'Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.'"

The "double portion" had reference to the birthright portion, an inheritance. A double portion was the birthright portion. In that sense, the sons of the prophets collectively were the heirs of Elijah. They were his spiritual heirs. Elisha was the one who was going to, in that sense, take over and occupy that office. While all the sons of the prophets were the collective heirs of Elijah, Elisha received the double portion, the birthright portion. In other words, God empowered all of them; but Elisha, in a very special way, in a way that made him stand "head and shoulders" above all the other prophets, the other students of Elijah.

This didn't mean that Elisha had twice as much of God's Holy Spirit as Elijah did because Elijah was singled out as the great prophet. Even John the Baptist is one who came in the spirit and power of Elijah; he didn't come in the spirit and power of Elisha. Elijah was the great prophet, but Elisha was his heir. And in that sense, he is pictured as getting a double portion, referring to the birthright portion.

Verses 14-15, "Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha....'" God performed a special miracle in intervening. God intervened and made it very obvious to all of his people as to who was taking Elijah's place. Elisha stood out. God worked through Elisha in a special way,

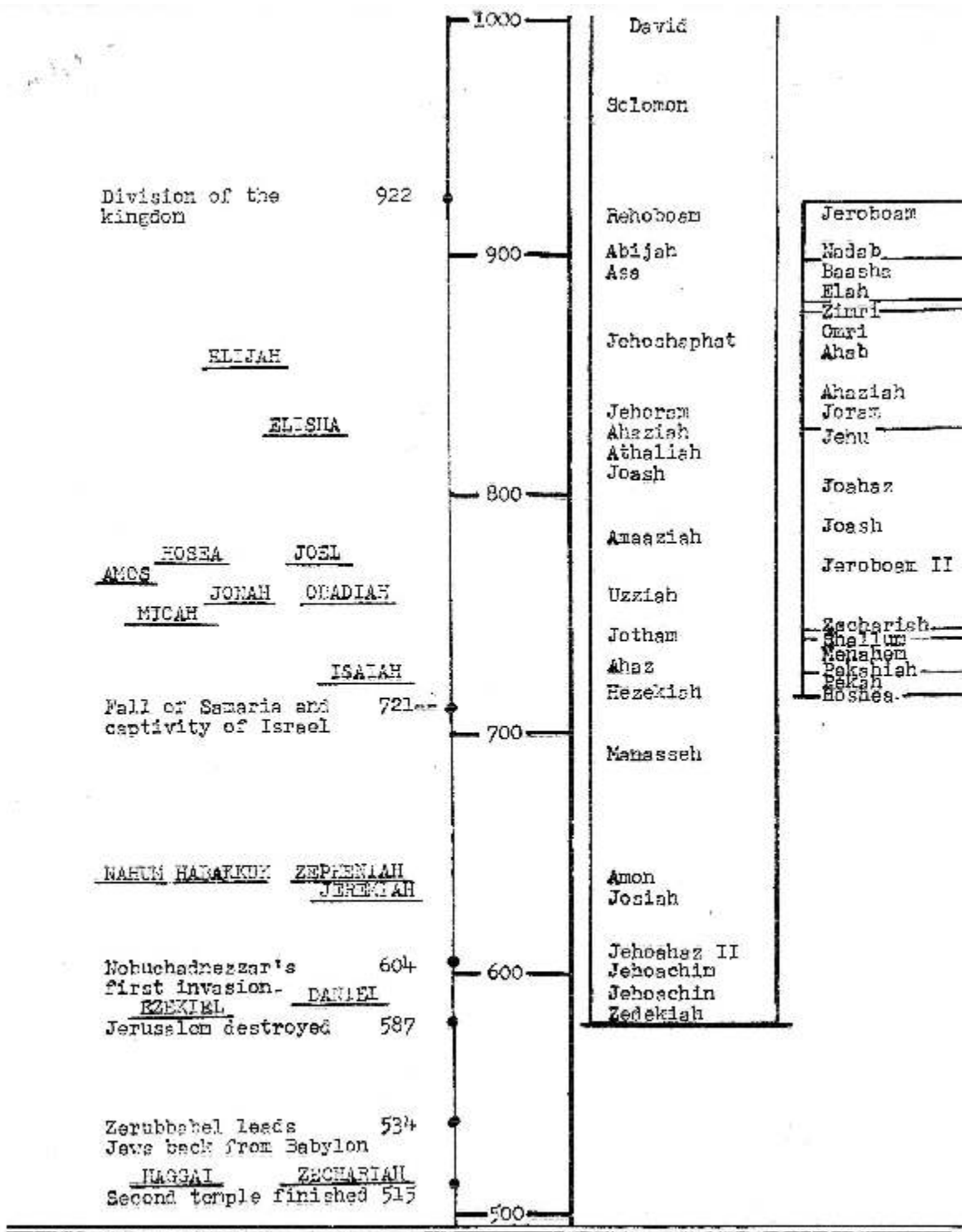
in the same way He had worked through Elijah. In a time of transition, God always makes it plain.

There is one thing to comment on.

Verse 11, "...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." There are three heavens mentioned in the Bible. Heaven can refer to the heaven of the earth's atmosphere where the birds fly and the clouds are. It can refer to outer space where the sun, moon and the stars are. Or it can refer to what is called the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:2), the heaven of God's abode.

The heaven into which Elijah was taken by a whirlwind would have been the heaven of the earth's atmosphere. A whirlwind is something that exists in the earth's atmosphere. We will notice in the next Bible study that Elijah simply left. God simply, in a supernatural way, caught up Elijah and removed him to a different place.

We covered a lot of material this evening, but hopefully, in chart form, the historical portion will make it a little easier for you to follow and keep up with all of these names. We have all these names back and forth, but it kind of gives you an idea as to the time flow. It is one of the things that we want to go through as we go through the material that is in this survey of the Old Testament.



Chronology of Kings and Chronicles