

I KINGS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Kings chapter 16 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now keep in mind that as we are going through I Kings we are looking at the kings in both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah and they do go back and forth and it can be confusing. Thus, when they are speaking of Israel they are speaking of the Northern Kingdom and when they are speaking of Judah they are speaking of the Southern Kingdom, where the temple was located, Jerusalem!

As we concluded last time we were told, **“In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, and reigned twenty-four years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.”** I Kings 15:33-34. And so as we pick up this evening in I Kings chapter 16, starting in verse 1, we are continuing to deal with the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Baasha, who was wicked and followed in the ways of the first king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam. Thus, let’s begin reading and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

I KINGS 16**VERSES 1-4**

1. Now in II Chronicles 16:7-10 we see the prophet Hanani rebuke Asa the king in the Southern Kingdom of Judah for what he did and Asa was so mad at Hanani that he throws him in prison to silence him. Now we see this prophet's son, Jehu, who also speaks with strong words against sin. You think he would have learned from his father not to speak up, but he was a prophet of God and he understood that when you confront sin fearlessly, even to the king, they will not like it, it would be dangerous! And how true that is even today, people do not want to hear that they are sinners separated from God, they want to do whatever they want. Even Christians, as they are living in sin, don't want to be told that they are in danger, that they need to get right with God because of their sin. But may that not stop us from speaking forth the truth of God in love!

2. Now the reign of Baasha was twenty-four years, longer than any other king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel up to this point. But because of the evil that he did, because he was leading the nation into sin, judgment is coming and his days are numbered. And we not only see this prophet pronounce judgment upon Baasha, but also his descendants, just like happened to Jeroboam, and there dead bodies will not get a proper burial, but will be left out for the dogs and birds to eat!

VERSES 5-7

1. Jehu's prophetic ministry lasted some 50 years, into the time of Jehoshaphat the king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, according to II Chronicles 19:2.

2. The Bible tells us in Psalm 103:8-11, **"The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him."** Yes, God is gracious and merciful, He is slow to anger and thus, what Baasha did must have been very wicked because it provoked the Lord to anger and His judgment was poured out upon Baasha and his descendants.

Keep in mind that Baasha conspired to have Nadab, the son of Jeroboam murdered and then he made himself king. Thus, because of his wicked actions, he is being judged and for leading the nation into idolatry. Now some might not think that this is fair because God said that the descendants of Jeroboam, including Nadab, would be killed and thus, isn't he just fulfilling what God had said? Absolutely not, yes God did use that but that was the wicked heart of Baasha to have Nadab murdered and if you read that section in I Kings chapter 15, you don't see that he sought God and God instructed him to do this. This was out of his own evil heart and God used it for His purposes!

VERSES 8-10

1. So now Elah, the son of Baasha is king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and he reigns for only two short years and he is assassinated by Zimri, who was in charge of the commander of half of Elah's chariots. And do you see when this happened, when Elah was "**drinking himself drunk**". In other words, he let his defenses down, his senses were dulled and thus, he was very vulnerable at this time. And when he was not alert, when his defenses were down, when he was in this weakened condition, the enemy, Zimri, came in and struck him dead!

2. As much as some may think, the Bible does not say that we should not drink. I realize that may shock some of you, but it doesn't. What the Bible does say is that we should not get drunk. The problem is that when people drink, they like to get a "buzz" or to feel good, and the reality is, they get drunk. And we see the large numbers of people today that are in bondage to alcohol. I think Paul makes it clear in what we as Christians should do regarding drinking. He says in I Corinthians 6:12, "**All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful [profitable]. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**" Don't let alcohol put you into bondage or cause anyone to stumble. It would be far better to avoid it than to be brought under the power of it.

VERSES 11-14

1. The judgment pronounced against Baasha and his descendants comes to pass as his son Elah and all his male family and friends were killed, wiped out by Zimri. Folks, as you read of this you may be wondering why this is happening, what is going on? The answer is simple. They walked away from the Lord and God gave them over to do the things that were in their heart and thus, here is all this wickedness pouring forth and it leaves death and destruction behind. And you can clearly see the downward spiral in which the Northern Kingdom is heading, and tragically, it is only going to get worse!

VERSES 15-20

1. So now Zimri is king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and his reign is only seven days! After he assassinated Elah the king and took the throne, after he murdered the household of Baasha, the people and the commander of the army, Omri, did not want Zimri as their king and they tried to take the kingdom back by force. They went to Tirzah, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and took the city and when Zimri saw the handwriting on the wall, he knew it was over and burned the king's house down upon himself and he committed suicide rather than dying by the hands of Omri!

VERSES 21-22

1. How sad this is. First of all we see the nation divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms and now, we see, for a short time, the Northern Kingdom of Israel divided into two parts, half siding with Omri and half siding with Tibni as their king. How long did this last? We are told that the division began in the twenty-seventy year of the reign of Asa in the Southern Kingdom and Omri came into full possession of the kingdom when Tibni died, in the thirty-first year of the reign of Asa, and thus, this division lasted about 5 years.

2. What is truly tragic is that they did not learn their lessons; they did not repent of their sins and get right with God, but continued spiraling downward, away from God. Matthew Poole put it like this, “The people of Israel fell into a civil war; yet neither this nor any other of God’s dreadful judgments could win them to repentance; which is an evidence of their prodigious impiety and incorrigibleness, and how ripe they were for ruin.” May our hearts be open to the Lord and what He is showing us!

VERSES 23-24

1. Here we see Omri buy Samaria and build it up, and it becomes the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Regarding this piece of property, we are told, “Excavations at Samaria . . . show that Omri was the first builder on the one-hundred-meter-high hill. This site was a good choice, for it was to withstand several sieges.” (Wiseman)



Photo by Howard Vos

The hill on which King Omri of the northern kingdom built the city of Samaria (1 Kin. 16:24). It remained the capital city of Israel until the nation fell to the Assyrians . . . (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, I Kings 16:23-28).

VERSES 25-28

1. From Jeroboam down through Omri, things get progressively worse. And just when you thought it couldn't get any worse than it already is, that maybe those dark days are over, here comes Ahab, one of the most wicked kings in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Wickedness is growing like a cancer in the Northern Kingdom and yet, if they repented and got right with God, blessings would flow, but they refused and we see the downward progression!

VERSES 29-33

1. Now we see this 22-year reign of Ahab over the Northern Kingdom of Israel and during that time he spread his wickedness throughout the land. He was worse than all the previous kings before him. Yes, Jeroboam intended to worship the Lord through idolatrous images, like the golden calf, but Ahab turned completely away from the Lord and served Baal. Of this Canaanite deity, we are told, “Baal was a pagan god of storms and fertility, worshiped throughout the ancient Middle East because of his association with powerful forces. His name literally means ‘Owner,’ ‘Master,’ or ‘Husband.’ In Canaanite literature, Baal is often associated with the fertility goddess Asherah, whose sacred ‘Asherah poles’ are mentioned numerous times in the OT (2 Kin. 21:7). Worship of these pagan deities involved self-mutilation, ritual prostitution, and infant sacrifice. Despite these despicable practices, the Israelites themselves adopted Baal worship—a factor which eventually led to God’s punishment (Judg. 2:11–15; Jer. 19:4–6).” (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, 1 Ki 16:30-31).

Not only that, but he marries Jezebel, the daughter of a priest of Baal, which was another way of turning away from the Lord! We have all heard of the dynamic duo, well when you put these two characters together, Ahab and Jezebel, you might call them ***THE DEMONIC DUO***, for the things they are going to do! Thus, Ahab wanted to forget about the Lord, as seen in his actions, and worship Baal instead, and that is exactly what he did do! Maybe it was a “in your face” to God, but he was not hurting God, only himself as we will see as we look at his life, which has over 5 chapters dedicated to this man Ahab!

2. Now I want you to notice the downward progression that Ahab entered. He first married Jezebel who led him in the worship of Baal. He not only worshiped Baal, but he served Baal. He had completely turned his back to the true and living God. Thus, he built an altar in Samaria to worship Baal and set up an Asherah pole or phallic symbol to worship also. And to say the least, God was not pleased with the actions of Ahab, and the idolatry he was leading the nation in. And yet, listen to what Russell Dilday had to say regarding this marriage between Ahab and Jezebel, from a worldly perspective. He wrote, “Had a secular historian been recording these events, the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel would likely have been applauded as a prudent political move. Both Phoenicia and Israel were being threatened by Syria, and the marriage gave Ahab a powerful military ally at a crucial time.” That is, of course, if you take God out of the picture. You don’t have to make alliances with the world for safety, you just have to look to the Lord and see the salvation He will bring to a situation, no matter how outnumbered you may be. We have seen that in our study of the Old Testament so far and we will continue to see that. God does not need large numbers to bring about a victory and sometimes, He doesn’t need, or better put, won’t use anyone but instead He will do it Himself!

VERSE 34

1. This fulfills the prophecy that Joshua made after destroying the city of Jericho. In Joshua 6:26 we read **“Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, ‘Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.’”** We are not sure if they died as a curse, or, as Russell Dilday wrote, “Archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of a practice in ancient biblical times called ‘foundation sacrifices’ in which children were buried, maybe alive, in the foundations of buildings.” In whatever way they died, I tend to lean that they were struck dead, but it was truly tragic and not necessary. You see, Joshua was saying that whoever tries to rebuild Jericho, as they lay its foundation, their firstborn will die, and as they set up its gates, their youngest shall die also. In the days of Ahab, Hiel attempted to do this, some 500 years after Joshua spoke these words, and Abiram, his firstborn and Segub, his youngest died, just as Joshua said would happen.

Now why is this important? Because God was warning Ahab, it was a merciful warning to him to say the least, and the warning is this. The Lord was showing him that he couldn’t go against God’s Word without paying a price. Look at what happened with this man Hiel and how two of his sons died because he refused to heed the Words of God, even though this warning was given some 500 years earlier! And what a warning this is to us. God is merciful and He is warning us that even though His Word was written thousands of years ago, He still holds us accountable and thus, may we listen and obey!

2. Things were looking as black as night in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. There seemed to be no light at all. But as black, as dark as things seemed, God was getting ready to send a light into this area by the name of Elijah! And folks, we may think our land is dark, there is no hope, it is just black and cold, but God always has His faithful remnant that will stand up for Him and shine brightly for Him, and thus, don't lose hope, shine brightly! In regards to this man named Elijah, J. Vernon McGee wrote,

God had to have His man present at the time when Ahab and Jezebel sat on the throne of Israel. It would have to be someone who would have the courage to stand up against them. God had that man ready. He was Elijah the prophet, one of the greatest men who ever walked across the pages of Scripture. Also he is probably the man who will return to the earth to witness in the last days - it is predicted that he will return.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible Volume II, p. 283

And so let's find out about this man Elijah and the ministry he had, during a time when leaders and people did not want to hear what he had to say.

I KINGS 17**VERSE 1**

1. Things were not looking good for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Things were dark, spiritually speaking. In fact, F. B. Meyer wrote, “The land swarmed with the priests of Baal and of the groves - proud of Court favour; glorying in their sudden rise to power; insolent, greedy, licentious, and debased. The fires of persecution were lit, and began to burn with fury.” He goes on to say, “The whole land seemed apostate. Of all the thousands of Israel, only seven thousand remained who had not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. But they were paralyzed with fear; and kept so still, that their very existence was unknown by Elijah in the hour of his great loneliness.” That was the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Now, in that hour of darkness comes this light of God to expel the darkness that had come upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel and that light of God was a man by the name of Elijah. His name means, “Yahweh is my God” and in a day when there was confusion, Elijah’s name spoke of who he rested in! Elijah came from the area of Gad, in the Trans-Jordan area on the east side of the Jordan River. And as he comes to this apostate kingdom, he comes with words of judgment as he tells Ahab that the rain would cease to come from the sky until Elijah called for it. And, according to James 5:17, there was no rain for 3½ years.

2. Now this may seem like a strange thing, no rain for 3 ½ years but you have to understand what God was doing, what this judgment that was upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel was all about. You see, you have to understand what god they were serving and worshiping. Baal was a nature god who controlled the weather. He brought rain upon the crops to those who worshiped him. The worship of the true and living God had almost been exterminated in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and now Elijah comes on the scene to tell them, “God is not dead!” He does this by silencing Baal by stopping the rain, and showing that there is only one God, and He is in control of even the weather! Elijah took a stand for God when everyone else seemed to ignore God. He tells them God is alive. And at end of this short message of judgment that he gives to king Ahab, he leaves the area.

3. I realize that we too are living in dark days and it is easy to give up, it is easy to say, “Lord come and get me out of here” but the reality is, we too are to be a light to this world that is living in darkness. Don’t get me wrong, I long for the Lord’s return and I look forward to it, but until He does come, I want to shine brightly in this dark world; I want people to see Jesus! And keep in mind, Elijah was a man of like nature, just like us, and yet his power was from above. We too must recognize that our God lives and we are aware of His presence in our lives and if we truly believe that, then we will live accordingly, as Elijah lived and shinned for the Lord!

VERSES 2-7

1. I want you to notice that God is leading Elijah one step at a time. He first had to speak to king Ahab before God told him to go to the Brook Cherith. And folks, God does the same with us, He leads us one step at a time and all we must do is walk! Now we don't know for how long, but for a period of time, Elijah spends time in the desert. God is using this time to work in Elijah so that He might work through him. We all need those times of growth. And God feeds Elijah by the raven bringing him food and the brook giving him water. God is a God of miracles, and he is still a God of miracles today. Interestingly enough, the name "**Cherith**" comes from the ancient Hebrew root that means, "to cut away, to cut up or off." In other words, God had some work to do in his life, some cutting away and God does the same with us!

2. Notice that as the brook dries up, Elijah does not move on or become anxious. He remains in this location, without water, waiting upon God for direction. What a lesson to learn. With our minds we find ways of providing for ourselves, and God is saying, "**Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, wait, I say, on the LORD!**" Psalm 27:14. We are to wait in faith upon the Lord to direct us and provide for us. That is what Elijah was doing.

Now think about that. How hard it is for us to sit by a dried up brook. We would rather fight the prophets of Baal or whatever than to sit in a dry place. What are these dry brooks we might face and may have faced some already? Maybe it is the drying up of popularity, or that of health, or money, or friendships and-so-on. The reason is simple and I like the way that F. B. Meyer puts it. He wrote, “Why does God let them dry? He wants to teach us not to trust in His gifts but in Himself. He wants to drain us of self, as He drained the apostles by ten days of waiting before Pentecost. He wants to loosen our roots ere He removes us to some other sphere of service and education. He wants to put in stronger contrast the river of throne-water that never dries.” God always has a reason and it is to grow us, to get us to trust in Him more and more!

VERSES 8-9

1. Now God instructs Elijah to leave Israel, and go to Zarephath, which is about seven miles south of Sidon on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in Lebanon. Not only was he told by God to go to a Gentile city but also to a widow’s house and that this widow will now take care of him. Of all people, a widow was the one who needed help, and now she was going to care for Elijah! Why did God send Elijah to Zarephath? Keep in mind that this was the area that queen Jezebel was from, the wife of king Ahab and as Wiseman tells us, “Elijah was visiting enemy territory and showing the power of God in an area where Baal was worshipped, though ineffective through drought.” Folk’s, we too are in the enemies territory and may we not be afraid to shine for Jesus!

VERSES 10-11

1. Elijah calls to this widow to bring him some water, and in a place where water is scarce; she does not refuse to bring him some water. But before she even gets the water, he asks for some bread also. Times were tough, as we are going to find out, and water was easier to get than bread. But make no mistake about it, this woman was very poor as Spurgeon points out, “You learn this from the fact that she had not even firewood. Now, there was no reason why she should not have had that even in time of famine of bread, for there was no famine of wood, unless she had been extremely poor.” And as we are going to see, she was in trouble, she had reached the end of her resources. Listen to what was taking place as we look at verse 12.

VERSE 12

1. Imagine the timing here. This woman is so poor, times are so tough, that she has just enough food to prepare a last meal for her and her son and then they will die! And God sends this prophet, Elijah to her so she can feed him? You bet because when we reach the end of our resources, our God is now ready to work. When we get out of the way, He will do great things, as we will see!

VERSES 13-14

1. Notice that Elijah is drawing her to the God of Israel, she knows of Elijah's God, but now Elijah wants Yahweh to be her God! Thus, the first thing he tells her is, "**Do not fear.**" Why would he say that? Because she was fearful, her life and the life of her son were about to end because they were going to starve to death, but now Elijah tells her not to fear! How can that be done? By putting the situation away and trust in the Lord!

Next he tells her, "**go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me.**" What an outrageous request, to take this last piece of food that was for her and her son and give it to this prophet. And as outrageous as that was, that was the step of faith that she needed to take, make this cake of bread and give it to Elijah!

And lastly, "**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.'**" You see, apart from trusting in the Lord and taking that first step, she would never see the blessings that would come! All Elijah is telling her is to put her trust in the Lord!

For us, we must put our trust in the Lord. It seems foolish to put our trust in a God we can't see, that we must give Him our life before He will give to us eternal life, but that is what He is asking us and before the blessing, there must be the death of that old life and be raised up in the new life that is only found in Christ!

2. Here lies another great spiritual principle. The firstfruits belong to God, and the rest is ours. He must be the priority in your life and He will supply your needs. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”** And in Luke 6:38, Jesus said **“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”** You see, if you look at the situations you face and focus on them, you will be fearful. But if you focus on the Lord, the giver and sustainer of life, then your fears will be cast away because you know that He cares for you! Let’s see the faith of this woman, if she will take those steps of faith and obey what the Lord has told her through the prophet Elijah!

VERSES 15-16

1. What great faith as this widow does just as Elijah told her and the result was that there was always enough to meet their needs. Remember what Paul said in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**

2. Now why didn't God just give her all the meal and oil at once? Listen to what Spurgeon had to say and then I will add one more point. He wrote, "Why did not God give her a granary full of meal at once, and a vat full of oil instantly? I will tell you. It was not merely because of God's intent to try her, but there was wisdom here. Suppose he had given her a granary full of meal, how much of it would have been left by the next day? I question whether any would have remained, for in days of famine men are sharp of scent, and it would soon have been noised about the city, 'The old widow woman who lives in such-and-such a street, has a great store of food.' Why, they would have caused a riot, and robbed the house, and perhaps, have killed the woman and her son. She would have been despoiled of her treasure, and in four and twenty hours the barrel of meal would have been as empty as it was at first, and the cruse of oil would have been spilled upon the ground."

I believe that is one of the reasons and the other is that she had to depend upon God daily to provide for her. If He gave it all at once, in times of prosperity you might say, she would not have to depend upon God. I think this is the other reason and I think God uses both today, but primarily in this country He gives us just what we need for the day because He wants us to depend upon Him every day to provide for us!

VERSES 17-18

1. Can you imagine the days of joy as God was providing for her and her son, along with the prophet Elijah and now this? Her son dies and how devastating that must have been. Not only to lose a son, but that was her only hope, that one day he would be able to provide for her. Now that hope is gone!

Not only that but this woman blames the death of her son on her own sinful ways. It is quite possible that she had this son out of wedlock and now that the light of God is exposing her sinful ways, she feels that she is being judged. And in the end, she is blaming Elijah for coming and exposing her sin by bringing her to the God of Israel!

VERSES 19-22

1. How was this dead boy brought back to life? By physical contact and prayer. How are the spiritually dead brought back to life? Of course it is by contact with the risen Lord and that is done by physical contact! It is by knowing them and loving them and praying for them. In regards to this J. Vernon McGee wrote,

Elijah made contact with the boy's body three times. This is the great principle of resurrection—it involves contact with life. Today Christianity needs to be in contact with Jesus Christ. When it is not, it is as dead as a dodo bird. We need to recognize that this is one of the great miracles of Scripture: “and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” You and I are dead bodies. We are lost sinners—dead in trespasses and sins.

If we have trusted Christ, then we can say that we were crucified with Him nineteen hundred years ago; He died, and we died with Him. He was raised, and we were raised with Him. We are joined to the living Christ today—if we are not joined to Him, we are nothing. The apostle Paul expressed it this way: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Elijah had to learn that he was a dried-up brook, an empty flour barrel, a dead body. When Elijah recognized this, then God could use him. Martin Luther once said that God creates out of nothing. Until a man recognizes that he is nothing, God can do nothing with him. That is the problem with many of us today: we are too strong, we have too much ability, and God cannot use us.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible Vol. II, p. 285

VERSES 23-24

1. This woman witnessed daily the miracles of God, as food was provided for her and her son, besides for Elijah. And yet that did not bring her to the faith. It did not show her God in a way she needed to see Him. What changed her heart? The miracle of the **RESURRECTION!** It is ultimately seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is also seen in us, as God has taken these dead spiritual bodies and made them alive again in Christ. Our lives have changed and that is a witness to those around us. They see the resurrection working in us. Salvation, living the resurrected life, is one of the greatest testimonies of our faith. May we share it with others!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 3:1-3, **“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”** As people look at our lives, what are they reading? May they see the power of God working in us and through us that even in this dark world, they may come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior!