

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 KINGS 22

WE RETURN TO 1 KINGS 22 ON THE BRINK OF WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ARAM (SYRIA). IF YOU REMEMBER, 1 KINGS 20 TOLD US ABOUT THE CONSECUTIVE WARS BETWEEN ARAM AND ISRAEL. GOD STEPPED IN, IN SPITE OF AHAB'S EVIL, IN DEFENSE OF HIS OWN REPUTATION AND GRANTED VICTORY FOR ISRAEL. THERE IS PEACE IN ISRAEL FOR A TIME AND AHAB SPENDS TIME LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO PLANT A GARDEN. HE AND QUEEN JEZEBEL COMMIT GREAT EVIL IN THIS ENDEAVOR (KILLING NABOTH) AND A CURSE IS MADE AGAINST THEIR HOUSE. SHOCKINGLY, AHAB HUMBLING HIMSELF AND THE LORD DECIDES TO HOLD OFF THE JUDGEMENT FOR A TIME. HOWEVER, AHAB'S CONTRITION IS SHORT LIVED.



1 KINGS 22:1-5 - ISRAEL AND JUDAH JOIN FORCES AGAINST ARAM

ARAM RETURN TO ENCROACH UPON ISRAEL'S TERRITORY. AS A RESULT, AHAB REACHES OUT TO THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH, WHICH IS PRESENTLY RULED BY KING JEHOSHAPHAT. WE DO NOT (YET) LEARN MUCH ABOUT JEHOSHAPHAT AND HIS REIGN, AS THE FOCUS OF THESE CHAPTERS IS MOSTLY ON AHAB'S RULE. BUT VERSE 5 DOES GIVE US A CONTRAST BETWEEN JEHOSHAPHAT AND AHAB. JEHOSHAPHAT ASKS TO FIRST INQUIRE "FOR THE WORD OF THE LORD."

RAMOTH-GILEAD (ESV STUDY BIBLE) - "EVEN AFTER SUCH A CRUSHING DEFEAT, THE KING OF ARAM (SYRIA) WAS ABLE TO HOLD ON TO THE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT CITY OF RAMOTH-GILEAD IN TRANSJORDAN, WHICH WAS SITUATED ON A MAJOR TRADE ROUTE RUNNING FROM THE RED SEA TO DAMASCUS..."

1 KINGS 22:6-12 - THE "PROPHETS" COME TO GIVE THEIR "WORD"

V. 6-7 - THE PROPHETS THAT AHAB CALLS "PROPHECY" THAT VICTORY WILL COME IF THEY GO UP IN BATTLE. JEHOSHAPHAT WANTS A SECOND OPINION.

IT APPEARS THAT TO AHAB, THERE IS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN "THE LORD" (YAHWEH) AND WHAT OR WHOEVER THESE PROPHETS WERE GETTING THEIR INFORMATION FROM. WE LEARNED FROM 1 KINGS 18 THAT THERE WAS QUITE THE PROPHETIC CULT IN ISRAEL (THOUGH THOSE PROPHETS OF BAAL WERE EXECUTED AFTER ELIJAH'S DUEL AT MOUNT CARMEL).

AHAB IS HAPPY TO HEAR FROM HIS DIVINE SOURCES, A WORD THAT IS FAVORABLE TO HIM. A WORD THAT VALIDATES WHAT HIS OWN WILL IS. INTERESTING, IT IS THE TRUE PROPHET OF YAHWEH, MICAIAH WHO TELLS HIM SOMETHING THAT OPPOSES HIS OWN SET PLANS. AND AHAB DOESN'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT. SO MUCH SO THAT AHAB HAS NOT WELCOMED MICAIAH TO THE PARTY AT FIRST. VERSE 8 ACTUALLY TELLS US THAT AHAB HATED HIM.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE "WORD OF THE LORD" IS NOT ALWAYS THAT WHICH WILL CONFIRM WHAT WE WANT OR WHAT WE HAVE PLANNED AND AS A RESULT MAY NOT ALWAYS MAKE US "HAPPY". BUT IF IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD, SHOULD WE NOT TREASURE THAT OVER OUR OWN PERSPECTIVE? A GOOD CHECK FOR OUR SOUL IS WHEN WE HEAR A MESSAGE THAT IS CONFRONTING OR CHALLENGING. WE SHOULD NEVER DISMISS

IT OUT OF HAND BECAUSE IT DOESN'T MAKE US FEEL GOOD OR "BLESS" US. WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT PRAYERFULLY AND SCRIPTURALLY AND EMBRACE IT IF IT IS INDEED FROM GOD - KNOWING THAT IT WILL LEAD TO TRUE BLESSING WHEN OBEYED.

V. 11 - PROPHETS WOULD OFTEN USE ILLUSTRATIONS TO COMMUNICATE A MESSAGE. ZEDEKIAH THE SON OF CHENANAANAH USED IRON HORNS HE HAD MADE TO ILLUSTRATE THE VICTORY THAT WOULD COME, ACCORDING TO HIS WORD. THE HORNS WERE SYMBOLIC OF BAAL AND ASHERAH. CLEARLY HE IS NOT A PROPHET OF THE TRUE GOD.

1 KINGS 22:13-18 - MICAIAH CALLED FOR AND SPEAKS TO THE KINGS

V. 15-16 - MICAIAH INITIALLY TELLS THE KING TO GO UP AND SUCCEED IN BATTLE, MATCHING THE MESSAGE OF THE OTHER PROPHETS. BUT THIS WAS NOT THE TRUE MESSAGE AND UPON THE KING'S REQUEST, MICAIAH TELLS THE TRUTH, TRUTH WHICH WILL NOT MAKE AHAB HAPPY.

V. 17 - THE MESSAGE SPEAKS OF ISRAEL'S DEFEAT. SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. SOLDIERS WHO WILL RETURN HOME BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO LEADER.

1 KINGS 22:19-23 - MICAIAH CONTINUES.

MICAIAH CONTINUES TO SPEAK AND IN THIS CASE HIS WORD GIVES INSIGHT INTO THE MESSAGES OF THE FALSE PROPHETS. REMEMBER, MICAIAH IS SPEAKING THIS NOT ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH, BUT ALSO IN FRONT OF ALL OF THE OTHER PROPHETS AS WELL!

HE GIVES A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LORD'S THRONE ROOM AS THE TWO KINGS OBSERVED AND HEARD WHAT HAPPENED AS THEY SAT ON THEIR EARTHLY THRONES. THE LORD ACTUALLY CALLED FOR A SPIRIT TO PUT DECEPTION INTO THE MOUTHS OF THE OTHER PROPHETS. EVEN IN THE DEALINGS OF THE OTHER PROPHETS AND THEIR MESSAGES - THE LORD IS IN CONTROL!

1 KINGS 22:24-28 - ZEDEKIAH SLAPS MICAIAH. MICAIAH REBUKES ZEDEKIAH. MICAIAH IMPRISONED.

1 KINGS 22:29-33 - THE BATTLE BEGINS

FOR SOME REASON, JEHOSEPHAT STILL PLANS TO ALIGN WITH AHAB AGAINST ARAM. AHAB PROPOSES A STRANGE PLAN TO DISGUISE HIMSELF AS A REGULAR SOLDIER WHILE JEHOSEPHAT REMAINS IN HIS ROYAL GARB.

V. 31-33 - THE KING OF ARAM COMMANDED HIS BEST WARRIORS TO SPECIFICALLY GO AFTER AHAB. WHEN THESE MEN SAW JEHOSEPHAT, THEY REASONABLY ASSUME HE WAS THE KING OF ISRAEL. AFTERALL, JEHOSEPHAT WAS THE ONLY ONE ON THE BATTLEFIELD WEARING ROYAL CLOTHES. HOWEVER, JEHOSEPHAT IS ABLE TO CONVINCE THEM HE IS NOT THE KING OF ISRAEL AND THE SOLDIERS LEAVE HIM ALONE. REMARKABLE!

1 KINGS 22:34-40 - AHAB DIES IN BATTLE

V. 34 - A CERTAIN MAN AT RANDOM BETWEEN THE JOINTS - AHAB, DISGUISED AS JUST A REGULAR FOOT SOLDIER, UNPERSUED BY THE ARAMEAN ARMY IS SHOT BY AN ARROW APPARENTLY INDISCRIMINATELY SHOT BY A RANDOM SOLDIER. THIS ARROW PIERCES AHAB IN ONE OF THE FEW PLACES UNPROTECTED BY ARMOR. SOUNDS TO ME LIKE THE HAND OF GOD WAS INVOLVED.

V. 36 - FULFILLING THE WORD OF THE LORD THROUGH MICAIAH OF 1 KINGS 22:17

V. 38 - FULFILLING THE WORD OF THE LORD THROUGH ELIJAH OF 1 KINGS 21:19

1 KINGS 22:41-50 - JEHOASHAPHAT, KING OF JUDAH'S BIO

THERE ARE A LOT MORE DETAILS INTO THE REIGN OF JEHOASHAPHAT IN 2 CHRONICLES. WE ONLY GET A SNAPSHOT HERE, OUT OF OUR NARRATOR'S COURTESY TO HIS READERS. WE FIND OUT THAT JEHOASHAPHAT IS ACTUALLY A PRETTY GOOD GUY, WHO LOVES THE LORD. AND THIS STORY WE READ HIGHLIGHTS HIS CHARACTER IN A FEW WAYS WHICH ARE CONGRUENT WITH HIS LIFE. HE WANTS TO HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM A GENUINE PROPHET BECAUSE HE'S A LOVER AND WORSHIPPER OF YAHWEH AND HIS CONFUSING ALLIANCE WITH AHAB WAS ACTUALLY NOT A GOOD THING (V. 44) AS WE KIND OF SUSPECTED ALONG THE WAY.

V. 41-42, 50 - JEHOASHAPHAT WAS 35 WHEN HE BECAME KING AND HE RULED FOR 25 YEARS. HE IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS SON JEHOAM.

V. 49 - THERE IS SOME ALLIANCE WITH ISRAEL, BUT NOT FULL UNITY AS SHOWN HERE

1 KINGS 22:51-53 - AHAZIAH BECOMES KING IN ISRAEL

V. 51 - AHAZIAH BECOMES KING AND RULES FOR 2 YEARS.

AHAB, THE WORST KING IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY IS DEAD. HIS REIGN IS OVER BUT HIS SON AHAZIAH WILL CONTINUE THE LINE, FOR NOW. AHAZIAH'S REIGN IS JUST LIKE HIS FATHER'S AND HIS WORSHIP PRACTICES JUST LIKE HIS MOTHER'S (V. 52-53). AND FOR A FINAL TIME IN 1 KINGS WE ARE REMINDED OF THE ORIGINAL SIN OF ISRAEL, COMMITTED BY "JEROBOAM THE SON OF NEBAT" (V. 52). STILL HANGING THICK IN THE AIR ARE THE WORDS OF ELIJAH THAT THE ENTIRE LINE OF AHAB WILL BE CUT OFF. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME. AND LEST WE FORGET, QUEEN JEZEBEL IS BACK AT THE PALACE CONTINUING ON. WE WILL HAVE TO READ ON TO LEARN OF HER FATE.

1 KINGS ENDS HERE. THOUGH 1 & 2 KINGS ARE ORIGINALLY ONE NARRATIVE, IT IS FITTING TO PAUSE FOR A MOMENT BEFORE WE MOVE ON. IT'S BEEN A WILD RIDE FROM CHAPTER 1 UNTIL NOW. WE ARE LEFT UNRESOLVED AND WITHOUT CLOSURE. WE HEAR OF AHAB'S DEATH, A LITTLE ABOUT JEHOASHAPHAT AND THEN SOME HISTORICAL FACTS AND THEN IT'S OVER. IT'S ABRUPT AND UNSATISFYING.

PERHAPS THIS IS INTENTIONAL. THE ECHOS OF THE TIME OF ZION HAVE FADED. THE NATION IS DIVIDED. ISRAEL IS A MESS AND IT'S KINGS HAVE GOTTEN WORSE AND WORSE AND WORSE. DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER THAT DAVID WAS KING OVER ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN CHAPTER 1? DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER THAT SOLOMON IS ANOINTED KING OF THE NATION AS HE RIDES TOWARDS JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY? DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER HIS PRAYER FOR WISDOM? DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN THE TEMPLE WAS DEDICATED IN CHAPTER 8? IF WE AREN'T CAREFUL, WE WILL FORGET ABOUT THE "GOOD OLD DAYS" THAT WE REJOICED OVER IN THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF 1 KINGS. IF WE AREN'T CAREFUL WE WILL ACCEPT THAT THE STORIES OF LATE FILLED WITH IDOLATRY AND FAILURE ARE "JUST THE WAY THINGS ARE." IF WE AREN'T CAREFUL WE WILL BE OVERCOME BY SADNESS, AS ELIJAH WAS, THAT THERE ARE FEW WHO CARE ABOUT THE LORD'S NAME AND WAYS.

AND THAT'S WHY IT'S GOOD THAT WE HAVE THIS BREAK IN THE NARRATIVE - BECAUSE IT'S GOOD TO TAKE A BREAK AND REMEMBER WHERE WE'VE TRAVELED. IT'S IMPORTANT TO PAUSE AND REFLECT BEFORE WE JUMP IN AND MOVE ON. IT'S HEALTHY TO LIVE IN THE ABRUPTNESS OF HOW 1 KINGS ENDS.

BECAUSE BIBLE READER AND BELIEVER IN THE PROMISES OF GOD, WOE UNTO US IF WE LOSE HOPE. WOE UNTO US IF WE ACCEPT THAT THIS IS THE WAY THINGS ARE. WOE UNTO US IF WE FORGET THE PROMISES GOD HAS MADE. IT IS SO TEMPTING TO GET FOCUSED ON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CURRENT MOMENT AND SPACE OF LIFE AND FORGET THE BIG PICTURE - OUR BIG PICTURE, THE BIG PICTURE OF THE UNIVERSE ITSELF IS BASED NOT ON WHAT IS IN FRONT OF US OR WHAT WE ARE DEALING WITH NOW OR WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING - THE BIG PICTURE OF LIFE ITSELF IS BASED ON THE WORD AND PROMISE OF THE FAITHFUL, COVENANT MAKING, AND COVENANT KEEPING GOD. AND OUR EYES MUST BE UPON HIM, NO MATTER WHAT IS VYING FOR OUR ATTENTION NOW.

1 KINGS ENDS IN A BLEAK AND SAD WAY. BUT THE END OF 1 KINGS IS NOT THE END. THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM, TO DAVID AND TO JESUS IS THE END. THE PROGNOSIS FROM THE DOCTOR IS NOT THE END. THE WAY YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ARE IS NOT THE END. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WORLD IS NOT THE END. THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW IS NOT THE END. THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM, TO DAVID AND TO JESUS IS THE END.

SO WE LOOK NOT AT HOW THINGS ARE NOW, BUT TO WHAT HAS BEEN AND WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED WILL BE. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE FAITH. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE HOPE. SO WE KEEP BELIEVING, WE KEEP HOPING AND WE KEEP READING.