

“The Divided Kingdom” Pt 2 - Class 15

A Walk Through the Old Testament

Various Scriptures

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November 15, 2019

Jeff: Heavenly Father, we are thankful, thankful people because You've told us that that's to be our posture, having been redeemed from the kingdom, the sphere of darkness and the rule of the evil one, where we were able to live the reign to our flesh. Now we've been redeemed from that and set down with the kingdom of the Son of Your love where we are indeed free from that bondage, and we can delight in You and in Your law and in Your Son who has provided redemption for us, and be guided in that by Your Holy Spirit. Father, we're thankful that we can live our lives in that freedom. And yet we realize that we are growing in what we already are in Christ. And so each day is different. Some days are more of a battle than others, and yet every day is a battle because there is that irreconcilable war that takes place within us, as having been raised in a kingdom of darkness and now being children of light. And yet we know that what You started in us You will bring to completion because You are faithful, not so much that we are faithful. But You are indeed faithful. So Father, as we gather here today, we're thankful for Your love toward us in Christ when we were yet sinners. We're thankful for the provisions that You've made for us. We're thankful for the opportunity that we have to gather and pray and to share concerns about one another, and also to study Your word so that we might be better equipped as men of God to go out into the world to not only live faithfully, but to speak Your word into the lives of others.

Father, we ask that You will bless us and strengthen us by Your grace in those endeavors. Be with our families. Father, be with our children. Be with our grandchildren and strengthen them in the gospel. Lord, at every hearing let them grow in their love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, we pray that if there are those sons and daughters and grandchildren that do not know You, we pray that You would put someone in their life that would speak the words of life to them, that they would respond in faith. Draw them to Yourself, Father, and make them new.

Father, we also pray and ask that You will be with Lila. And our hearts break when we hear about such a little one infected by the curse of sin. And Father, we think of Lila dealing with the struggles of a broken world, a fallen world. Of a sinful world. And so we lift her up to You and ask that You will protect her from the effects of this world and the frailty of the body. And Lord, we just pray that You will use the doctors and bring healing to her. If that's Your will we delight in it. And yet we know that You're more than capable to do all that we ask and even more. And so we pray that You'll just remove this difficulty from Lila altogether.

We pray that same thing for Nancy, knowing that as we commit her into Your hands we commit her into Your will. And yet You tell us to ask and to request from our heart. And so we do, praying that You will make her well. We pray that You will use these procedures and these treatments, or that You will do it supernaturally, whatever You choose to do. And so, Father, we pray.

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Father, we thank You for our brother Bruce. And we just continue to pray for him as he slows down. We just ask that You will bless him. And Father, we certainly pray that as he has been a blessing to many in this life, we certainly pray that You will be a blessing to him in these latter years. And Father, we pray that You'll grant him contentment and that You'll be able to apply that wisdom that he has imparted to so many, as he thinks about his own life at this stage. And Father, we just pray that You'll let him be settled and restful in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we also pray for our brother the bishop. And we certainly ask that You will bless him. We certainly miss him and certainly pray that You'll give him wisdom as he meets with family, but also we pray that You'll give them a good time too.

Father, we now ask that You will now bless the Word that we study. Use it, Father, by Your Holy Spirit as He takes it up and brings it to bear upon our lives in such meaningful ways, and Father, ways which each one of us need. So Lord, we pray and trust that Your Spirit will work in us just where we are. Bring us to that point in our lives that we need in order to bring glory and honor to Your name, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. You know, I want to share one thing with you before we get started today. You know, I was having a conversation with somebody just yesterday. And I've heard this a number of times. And I guess the reason why I wanted to share it with you is that I've heard some people say in the context of somebody struggling with anxiety and just not being able to put their mind at rest and that sort of thing. And this is what was said to me. This is what has been said to me on a number of occasions when I talk to people like that. I hear this. "I pray and it just doesn't work. God does not answer me."

And you know, here is how I've been answering people when they tell me things like that and when they respond to me in that sort of way. I tell people and I say, "The Bible makes it clear that we're living in the humiliation of Christ. And it is for God to exalt us at the proper time. That's exactly what 1 Peter says. 1 Peter talks about the Lord Jesus in His humiliation and His exaltation in 1 Peter 1:10. And then in 5:1 it uses almost the same phraseology: the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 1:10-11, NKJV. *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."*

5:1, ESV. *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker of the glory that is going to be revealed."*

Jeff: And in between that he talks about the Christian participating in the humiliation of Christ. But an interesting thing is that in verse 6 of chapter 5 it says, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the right hand of God, and He will exalt you at the proper time."* And all I'm saying is that gives us a framework for thinking about this life. Our best life is not now. This life is for humiliation. We're not better than our Master. We walk in the humiliation of Christ.

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Now that sets the context for understanding our prayers. When we pray we are often looking for exaltation. Lord, lift me out of the humiliation now. Set my feet into heavenly places in this life. But we need to understand that prayer does work, because God gives us the wisdom to walk in the humiliated life in the present moment. And that’s what James 1 is talking about. James says, “If you don’t have wisdom ask for it.” And the whole point is that we should never expect prayer to work if we’re expecting God to answer it by setting our feet in exaltation. He answers it by giving us wisdom and the ability to manage with endurance and perseverance and all of those things in the midst of the humiliation.

And as many times as people tell me that prayer just doesn’t work, I thought to myself that I just need to say that to you guys, because prayer does work. It’s just that our understanding of what ought to happen when we pray that needs to be checked. So anyway, that was free; no charge for that.

Ted Wood: Are you willing to entertain questions or thoughts about it, or not really?

Jeff: Yes, go ahead.

Ted: If we don’t think that what you just said is a core teaching from the very beginning, what you just said about the Christian expectation, then people pray expecting immediate exaltation, or short-term exaltation. And when they don’t get it, they become basically silent agnostics. They continue in the church and do all the things they’re supposed to do. But deep down inside they think that God may not really come through, that somehow God has dropped the ball. But they dare not mention it.

Brave Man: Yep.

Ted: Because it would be like saying that I’m an old world creationist, which I dare not mention. It would bring dishonor to some others. (Thank you, Don.) But it brings dishonor. And they think it’s going to come down on them adversely. And so you have congregations full of us who have been let down by God, but we don’t dare say it. But what you’ve stated is the antidote for that, the correct teaching. And I just wonder how many churches that would like to start with that, exposing new members or inquirers to that kind of teaching, how big would the churches be?

Jeff: Sure. Yes, because, you know, we have to set the expectation. So for instance, I’ll go on to say this. The reason why I know this so well is because I’ve struggled with anxiety myself in the past. And I read a book on that by Francis Schaeffer called *True Spirituality*. And he talks about “*substantial healing in the present life.*” And that phrase stuck with me, because substantial healing is what God provides in the present life. He doesn’t provide a cure in the present life, such that we have exaltation. What He provides is a life in the midst of humiliation where we catch glimpses of exaltation and anticipate what is to come. But there’s a substantial healing in the present life that occurs so that we can actually manage what it is that we deal with.

You know, we’re all supposed to put sin to death. But now I’m talking about some of these other things, the things that occur as a result of the Fall. For instance, some people from the earliest moments are anxious people. Now anxiety will lead to sin, right?, because it’s a fundamental distrust in God and His sovereignty. But the condition is borne out of the Fall, right? It’s a condition in which I have the opportunity of sin, and I really

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do. You know what I mean. All right, anybody else? (*Laughter*) Does anybody have any questions about that? Yes, Jordan?

Jordan: I’m trying to find the best way to ask this question. So about this time last year, not that I was struggling with it, but my wife and I didn’t have a lot of what I would say was humiliation in our lives. Things were going pretty well. I was being embarrassed. If we’re not better than our Master, why is it that we don’t see any struggling or having things that were feeling like we were being humiliated? Now certainly we always struggle with sin.

Jeff: Sure.

Jordan: But things seem to be going pretty well for us. And so I had been praying cautiously for God to introduce some humiliation into my life to sanctify me, and so forth. And sure enough, shortly after that, it came,—not anything that was too overwhelming, but it came.

Yes. I’m curious to hear thoughts about that. What are your thoughts on the mindset that I had, because I’m thinking about that. Should I be seeking humiliation, or should I just be prepared for it when it comes?

Jeff: Well, I’ll tell you what. I personally think that you’re in the midst of the humiliated life if you’re in Christ at the present moment. So wherever the circumstances of your life happen to be, as you live it out, I think that you will experience the blessing of God at times and at moments, right? And then there will be inevitably, in whatever way that God chooses to have you encounter it, those moments of humiliation along the way. And I think you will realize over time that life is something of a mixture. Yet in this life it’s predominantly humiliation. It’s not necessarily that you feel it all the time or experience it all the time, but just being in this moment is humiliation.

So that’s the kind of thing that you get. You know, everybody says, “When you need patience, pray for it.” Well frankly, I don’t want to. (*Laughter*) Because I know that God is going to put me into situations enough in this present moment where I’m going to get to practice all the Christian virtues.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And He does, right? So I’ll tell you what I don’t do. At almost 50, this is what I think. I think to myself that when I begin to think that I’m a pretty patient guy that I should pray for patience. And I think to myself, *You dummy! You don’t know what you want.* (*Laughter*) Because as soon as I get into a moment of needing patience, that circumstance of needing patience, I find that I don’t have it, right? So I always think to myself that when I’m feeling relatively good about myself is when I’m probably not the most introspective about myself, right? So I just let God deal with the circumstances that He brings in the moment of crisis.

Jordan: I think that has become more of my realization after the fact.

Jeff: Yes, that’s true.

Jordan: But anyway, I guess—Well, I’ll leave it at that.

Jeff: Well, I’ll just say this to you. You’re not the only one who feels guilty when the Lord blesses him, right? (*Laughter*) If you’re living a blessed life and you’re in a moment of blessing, you’re not the only one who feels guilty. Every one of us feels like when is

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the shoe going to drop, and why isn't it dropping on me yet? And do you know what I say? If you're in the midst of blessing, ride the wave, brother! (*Laughter*)

Don Maurer: Amen.

Jeff: You know what I'm saying?

Jordan: It's definitely true, because at the time we were looking around and our friends had kids with a terminal sickness.

Jeff: Yes.

Jordan: Everybody else seemed to be struggling with something, and it was kind of like why—

Jeff: Yes, why not us, right? It's kind of like no way; I don't want any part of that. That's what I think. You know, I'll tell you what. There was a time in my life where I just felt like it was one circumstance after another for years. It was just like boom, boom, boom! And then I sort of woke up about six months or a year into it and I realized that hey, nothing bad is happening. This is awesome, you know? (*Laughter*) You know, it's just amazing! But I'm rambling on. Anyway, when blessing comes, enjoy it. That's what I say.

Ted: I think your point is well made. I often feel like my life is blessed in many ways, and I've not suffered much humiliation. But I think that often we think about whether I'm humiliated or am I having a blessing, based on my perception of what humiliation ought to look like.

Jeff: Yes, that's right.

Ted: And so we may think, “Oh, gee whiz! I'm not like a martyr. I'm not like a missionary. I'm not like the Elliots who got speared on the beach.” I think about the great old saint Sebastian who was shot through with arrows. When you go to a Catholic church, they'll have his picture. Now that's humiliation.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: So I'm not going through that, so I must not be humiliated. I'm just leading an ordinary basically boring life, day in and day out. The vast majority of our Christian life is an very ordinary life. And to be able to abide with that and to find joy in that is part of the humiliation.

Jeff: Yes. I mean, think about the common cold. What an annoyance it is, right? That's part of the humiliation of being in a fallen world and responding to it in a Christlike way. People don't think about that. We get annoyed about the cold and we kind of get grumpy about it. But this is a great opportunity for me in the humiliation of this cold to act in a Christlike way in this circumstance. Anybody else? No? Okay.

Transcriber's Note: A technical glitch.

Jeff: Oh, what's happening here? All right. Hopefully that comes on immediately. Anyway, if it doesn't, let me just walk you through this. (*Laughter*)

So what we're going to do is to continue to walk our way through the divided kingdom. I guess that probably the best thing for me to do would be to say to you again that what we start with after the Fall is the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, and the Davidic covenant. And then what? Christ is the culmination of this. But right now we're in this period, right? I guess I'm making these gaps a little too

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big. We’re in this period right here between the Davidic covenant and the coming of Christ. And things are coming apart at the seams. We’ve had a type in Solomon who reminds us of the Son who is to come. But he’s only a type and he’s affected by sin. And the wheels fall off for him as well. And so we’re going to be continuing to work our way through the kingdom, and basically watching either men who are just utterly unfaithful, all in the North, or men who are sometimes faithful but not wholeheartedly so. And that happens in the South.

So next week’s reading are these: Isaiah and Nahum. It’s on your sheet. What we’re going to do today is that we’re going to think about just some introductory things. There’s so much. But I just want us to focus on certain things. I want us to think about *Jehoshaphat*, who is the king of Judah. We mentioned him the last time we were together. Then I want to think about *Ahab*, because Ahab is the king in the North about the time of Jehoshaphat’s rule in the South. And we’re going to actually stay with Ahab for a little while because with Ahab we’re introduced under his reign to a prophet by the name of Elijah. And then we’re going to think about some of the happenings that go on during his reign. And then we’re going to look at *the international scene*. And then we’re going to think about *more kings and more prophets* from this period of time.

One thing that I would mention before we move out of this introductory spot here is this. When we think about Ahab we need to think, oh, he’s the king of the North. Now the question that might arise as you think about all this is why does God spend so much time in the North? Those are the guys who are disobedient. Those are the guys that are running wayward. And really, Judah is what it’s all about, because it’s from Judah that the kingly line is going to come. It is the Christ who is going to come from that line. Why is He wasting time with the North? Why not just cut them off?

Well, remember that the idea was that Jeroboam would separate from Solomon. He would separate, but he was not supposed to set up an alternative religion. He was supposed to allow the people of the North and encourage them to go to the South and worship in Jerusalem. In other words, this division was a temporary division. And Jeroboam sought to make it a permanent one. And so there’s an outstretched hand on God’s part to draw the North back into the faithfulness of the covenant. That’s why there is so much time spent with the ministry to the North. Okay?

So let’s think about a few things. *The seeds of the problem: money, women and idolatry*. Can I get an amen, brothers?

Brave Men: Amen!

Jeff: Yeah, right. *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: Not in that order.

Jeff: Not necessarily in that order. *(Laughter)* But always those three. No! *(Laughter)* All right. There are obvious consequences. I’m not going to stay with this very long because I want to get to what we’re going to do today. And this produces a kingdom that’s divided, and so I want to show you this.

These are the twelve districts under Solomon’s rule. This is what I was saying to you the last time. Notice: here is Judah and here is Benjamin. And really, what happens is that the divide comes right in there.

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Remember that I said the last time that Judah is really locked in terms of isolation. This is where Solomon ruled. You know, they didn't have the corvee. Solomon didn't impose taxes on them or take their children and put them into forced labor. So they have Philistia here. They have the Dead Sea here. And they have the Desert of Sin here at the Negev. And so they're basically isolated from the rest of Israel. And so God really makes them isolated with the rupture between the North and the South. And that's basically what it is. So you have two tribes in the South, that is, Benjamin and Judah, interestingly Saul and David, and then the rest of the tribes in the North.

So let's think about Jehoshaphat who is king in Judah. Remember, he's the king in that Southern area. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

Now let's think about this a little bit. I'm going to have you go to your Bibles because I want you to work through some passages with me today. And I want you to remember that Jehoshaphat's father was not a bad guy. Jehoshaphat's father was kind of a good fellow. The problem though with Jehoshaphat was that by the end of his life he had a foot ailment. And so he has to give up his regency. Not totally, but what happens is that Jehoshaphat comes alongside of him. And Asa and Jehoshaphat have a co-regency for three years. They rule together for three years. That foot ailment, that foot disease, was given to him by God so that he would understand or contemplate his circumstances and repent of his sin.

Now why repent of his sin? Because he was a good guy. He brought reform to the South. And he gathered the people in Jerusalem so that they could worship and give glory to God. So he was not a bad guy.

But the problem was this. He made a treaty with Ben-Hadad. Now I wish I had put this in there, but I need to go back. This is Damascus, all the way up in the North. Damascus will be a thorn in the flesh for Israel for a long, long time. Before Assyria ascends to power, which is really the first step (and we'll talk about that in a little bit), beyond Damascus and beside Philistia and so on, what happens is that Damascus is a pain. I mean, they're just a constant pain.

And so what happens is that Judah in the South makes a treaty with Damascus in the North. And what happens? What are you trying to do? You're trying to kill of your Northern brothers with that treaty, right? And so that's what happens. And so rather than trusting God, Asa makes a treaty with Ben-Hadad and Damascus.

And God says, “Look! This is not a good deal for you to do. And I'm going to give you a little foot disease. I'm going to give you a little time off of your feet to contemplate what you did. And perhaps you'll repent of it.”

Okay. So then what happens is this. Jehoshaphat comes to power after three years. His sole regency begins when Ahab in the North is in his fourth year. Now Ahab is just a wicked man, right? He marries Jezebel, a wicked woman. And they are just a mess, just a mess of a couple of people!

And so I want us to think about Jehoshaphat for a minute. And I want us to think about some of the wise things and some of the unwise things that he did just for a minute. Jehoshaphat's wise reign included things like Solomon-like prosperity. This king is not often given the credit for it, and I don't think we think about it in such ways. But this is a

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guy who really begins to expand Israel again and bring them back to Solomon-like glory and prosperity. He sends missionaries to the North because he realizes that the covenant still includes them, and he’s basically trying to preach to the North to draw them back into union with the South.

Now think about it. Why is it that the North and the South ruptured? It’s because there was idolatry in the king of the South, Solomon.

Now think about it. Jehoshaphat has now repented. He’s now a godly king. He’s a good king in the line of Judah. And what he’s trying to do is to draw the North back into union with himself.

And then what he does is that he basically creates a Supreme Court that functions over the land of Israel. It’s very Mosaic. You know how Moses’ father-in-law Jethro told him, “This is how you are to deal with the people, or you’re going to burn yourself out.” Well, in the same way Jehoshaphat creates a system over all of the South so that problems can be dealt with and justice can be administered.

However, there’s a lack of wisdom here as well. And the lack of wisdom is this. Early in Jehoshaphat’s reign he doesn’t trust Ahab. But somewhere along the line—and it’s not far into his reign—he begins to like Ahab. Don’t you wish that you could just catch a glimpse of what these characters were like? I mean, you think of Ahab as despicable and wicked. But don’t you wonder if we actually met the guy that we might like him? Don’t you think about it? And that’s the kind of thing that I think of. Here’s Jehoshaphat, this really great guy. And he meets him and he says, “Oh, he’s a nice guy.”

You know how it is. Have you ever had that friend? Your wife always tells you, “This is not the guy you want to be hanging around with.”

And you go, “Oh, but he’s kind of fun!” (*Laughter*) I mean, you all know what I’m saying to you, right? And he gets you into trouble, you know? This strikes me as the Ahab-like character.

And this is great. This is just an absolutely great story. So go to 2 Chronicles 18 for a minute. “*Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab.*”

There you have it right there. He marries into the line of Ahab, okay?

“*After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria.*” And Ahab has a party and he says, “Hey, you know what? I’ll tell you what. I’ve got some satellite nations that are under my control that give me all kinds of grief. Let’s say that you and me get together. And we go into battle at Ramoth-Gilead, and we’ll straighten some of these satellite nations out. And that will be good for me and you in the long run. Let’s do that.”

And Jehoshaphat is going, “Oh, I don’t know-o-ow!” (*Laughter*) And he says, “What do you think God says about it? Maybe we ought to inquire of a prophet.” And so they truck in all of these prophets. And all of these prophets come in and go, “Long live the king! You will prosper. You will go and you will defeat your enemies. God has said it.” You know, one after the other.

And Jehoshaphat leans over and he says to Ahab, “Don’t you have any true prophets in this city?” (*Laughter*) “Don’t you have any true prophets in your kingdom?”

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And Ahab leans over to him and says, “There’s one guy, Micaiah, and I can’t stand him! He never has anything good to say about me!” *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: I wonder why.

Jeff: At that point you think that Jehoshaphat would say, “Maybe I’m in the wrong spot.” *(Laughter)* “The true prophet of God doesn’t have anything good to say.”

So they bring in Micaiah. Now Micaiah is warned before he goes in. “Remember, you’re in front of the king! “And so Micaiah goes in and he goes, “King, live long; prosper. You’re going to go to Ramoth-Gilead and you’re going to have victory.” Right? *(Laughter)*

And Ahab says, “Stop rockin’ me. Tell me what you really think.”

“All right. You’re gonna go die.” *(Laughter)*

Now this is where your friend comes in. This is that friend you have. Ahab says, “Hey, are you ready? Are you ready for this? Do you want to go into this battle? We can take him. I mean, this guy is cocky. He doesn’t know anything. You ready to go?”

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff points to one of the Brave Men.

Jeff: This is you. *(Laughter)* Okay, I’m it. And Ahab says to you,--Jehoshaphat, “Hey, I’ve got a great idea! Why don’t you dress like me?” *(Laughter)* He thinks this is working out, right? He’s just been told by the true prophet of god, “You’re going to die if you go into this battle.” And your best bud tells you, “Dress like me; it will be great!” *(Laughter)*

Now they go into battle. And this is great. They go into battle. And the text says,-- don’t you love me; I’m reading it in Scripture!—The sovereign God who inspired Scripture has it recorded that an archer drew back his bow at random. And it found a chink in the armor of Ahab, and he ends up dying. Oh! *(Laughter)*

Now what’s God’s reaction? In chapter 19 of 2 Chronicles “*Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem.*” Now this is after what we just talked about. “*And Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer*”—he’s a prophet—“*went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked, and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. Nevertheless, some good is found in you. For you destroyed the Ashtoreth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God.’*”

Now the question is this. Here’s the question. At that point you think to yourself, “Ooh; that’s chilling!” You know what I mean? Jehoshaphat is met by this prophet who says this to him. You would think that Jehoshaphat would say, “I am not going to do that again.”

But no. What happens is that Ahab has a son by the name of Ahaziah. And he enters into a covenant with him. Now go with me to chapter 20 and verse 35. Listen to this. “*After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly.*” This is the son of Ahab. “*He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-Geber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Maresha prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, ‘Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.’ And the ships were wrecked, and not able to go to Tarshish.*”

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Now I want you to go to 1 Kings with me for a minute. Go backwards two books to 1 Kings chapter 22. Now I want you to see how this is reported in the book of Kings. Verse 47: *“There was no king in Edom; the deputy was king.”*

Now that deputy was probably placed there because Jehoshaphat ruled Edom as a satellite the state. And there were ships that were keeping Edom in check that belonged to the South. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold. *“But they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-Geber.”* That’s what we just read.

“Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Let my servants go with your servants in the ships.’ In other words, here’s the deal. “All the ships we made together are destroyed. But I’ve got a better idea. How about if my men go with your men on your ships?” And listen to what he says. *“But Jehoshaphat was not willing.”* When you put those texts together, it seems to Jehoshaphat eventually learns his lesson. It’s late in life, but he eventually learns. “No, I’m not going to do that anymore.”

And then it says what, right after that? It says, *“And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father. And Jehoram his son reigned in his place.”*

You know, isn’t it interesting? You have to catch it. But it’s almost like at the very end, right before the announcement of his death, the inspired writer says that he got it, unlike his father, right? When his father was approached by the prophet, and his father was told, “Why did you make this treaty with Ben-Hadad?” Asa put that prophet into prison. And Jehoshaphat wasn’t like that. He didn’t listen; he didn’t respond well. But he eventually got it, okay?

All right. Now let’s look at *Ahab of Omri*. This is the house of Omri, the third dynasty in Israel. And he’s king of Israel in the North.

Now one of the things that we realize is that there is a material prosperity under the rule of Omri. But there is absolute spiritual decay that’s taking place. And it’s in this setting that we’re introduced to Elijah the prophet.

I want you to think with me about Elijah the prophet. And in order to do that, let’s go to 1 Kings. Go to 1 Kings chapter 17. And this is right after Elijah predicts the drought that will last three to three-and-a-half years. And he goes to this widow’s house in Zarephath.

Now here’s the question. He goes to this widow’s house in Zarephath and he says, “Make me a cake.”

And the woman says, “My son and I are about to die. We don’t have any food in the house. We’re going to make one last cake and then we’re going to die.”

And he said, “No, go make a cake. And then remember that they make a cake, and there’s enough for more cakes throughout the famine.

The question is why this story? And why does God send this prophet to Zarephath?

Well, you have to remember what we’ve just been told. If you’re reading through this, you have to remember what just happened. Flip back to chapter 16 and look at verse 31, actually starting with verse 30. *“And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to*

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walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel of the daughter of Eth-Baal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.”

Now let’s go back to 17 and verse 8. Look at what it says in verse 9. *“Then the word of the LORD came to him.”* (To Elijah.” *“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to”* what? *“Sidon.”* “I want you to go to Baal country.” This is where the king is named Eth-Baal. This is where Baal worship comes from. “And I want you to go to Baal country.”

And guess who Baal is? Baal is the fertility god. He’s the god that makes it rain. “And I want you to go there. And I want you, without any farming utensils at all, to cause this woman’s flour never to run out. And show her who the real fertility God is.”

Now I want you to think about that for just a second. This is a powerful lesson to me and you, because we say, “Well, why did he do that?” He went to a widow, one widow in a desolate area who is about to die, insignificant. Why wouldn’t he have put it on Instagram or Facebook? Why didn’t he put it on his Web page? And it was good enough for God to go right to the widow.

I don’t know about you, but that says powerful things to me. What it says to me is that what God does in a corner is good enough. It will be like leaven and work its way out. Our trouble is that we want to start on a mountaintop rather than in a corner.

And for me that’s kind of the lesson I think about when I get into conflict. Why in the world here, with this woman?

Then I want you to notice this. This is great. Remember this? This is verse 17. *“The son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.”*

I want you to think about this. Why is this reported? It’s heart-wrenching, a human interest story. There’s something more here than that. Do you notice that it says, *“the mistress of the house?”* That’s the feminine form of the word *Baal*. *Ball* means *father, lord*. This is the mistress, the woman of the house. This is the feminine of Baal. And guess what God is doing through His inspired writer? He’s saying, “Guess where we still are,” right?

And for Elijah this is so typical. The woman says, “All you’ve done is to come here and remind me of my sin and show me the consequences of it. That’s all you’ve done.”

And Elijah, remember what he does? He goes up and he says, “LORD! The woman within my lodging, You know, I’m here! Look what You’ve done!”

And then the boy is given life. And what is God doing in the midst of this? He’s giving life in Baal country. That’s what He’s doing! He’s showing who is God and who is not God. That’s what He’s doing.

And then you get just a fabulous story—the battle on Mount Carmel, right? You know, this is one of those stories that I’d love to go into because it is one of those stories that is just absolutely showdown-like material. You know what I mean? But you know it already. The part I love is when he tells them, you know, “Oh, you go first.” And they cut themselves and they yell. And he’s like, “Hey, yell louder.” (*Laughter*) And it gets better. “Maybe Baal’s in the bathroom.” (*Laughter*) I mean, literally, he’s on the commode, you know?

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“All right, enough of this! Let’s get this thing down here!” You know, the altar of God. “Somebody pour water on it.” And he says something like a 30-some word prayer, or something like that. Boom! And then he’s just calm and cool. “All these guys, kill them all!”

And then he’s trampling down in the middle of the rain, this beautiful picture. And can’t you imagine this? I mean, I imagine this. Think of it. He’s defeated the prophets of Baal, and his God brought rain. And when he gets to Jezreel Jezebel is going to go, “Oh, I’ve been worshiping the wrong god all along! Your God is God!”

And instead, when he gets there she says, “I’m going to kill that prophet as soon as I find him. In fact, if he’s alive tomorrow, oh, look out!”

And all of a sudden Elijah goes, “What?” And he goes, “Forget this! I’m going to Mount Sinai and I’m going to die there.”

Do you see what I mean? You almost get the idea that he’s got his own ideas as to what should happen or unfold. And they’re not God’s ideas. And when they’re not His ideas, he’s much discouraged about them.

So he flees to Mount Horeb. And when he flees to Mount Horeb, it’s great. It’s really interesting. I don’t have the time right now to go into why it’s interesting. But I do want to say this to you. When he goes to Mount Horeb he’s all down and out. He’s depressed.

Look with me in chapter 19 of 1 Kings. This is where God summons him out of the cave. “*And He said to him, ‘Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.’*” And this is where the Lord passes by with a strong wind, and so on, and then the earthquake, and then the cool breeze.

But what is He doing? Why is He saying, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD? And I think that the reason God says that to him is because He’s actually reminding Elijah who He is, and how Elijah has described himself to others as His best bonus.

Why do I say that? Well, look with me at chapter 17. “*Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD lives, as the God of Israel lives, before whom I’*” what? “*Stand.*” In other words, he’s all puffed out with regard to the king here. “*The God before whom I stand.*”

Look in 18:15. “*And Elijah said, ‘As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today,’*”—to the king.

“Ah, you’re all strutting out here, right? Well, you come out and stand before me, because you’ve been telling everybody that you are the man who stands before God. You come out here and stand before me.”

I think that’s what he’s doing, right? And then, you know, this is the funny thing. He’s just irreconcilable. And do you know what God does? God says, “Now go work.” You know what I mean? That’s what He does! I mean, if you only had the text, what He does is He ministers to him, He reveals Himself to him. But Elijah just seems to be inconsolable. But God says, “Go work. Do you think you’re the only guy in the world? Go work.”

Now remember what he said. He said, “I am the only one left.”

And God says, “No, you’re not. There are 750 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

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Don Maurer: Seven thousand.

Jeff: Seven thousand, right. Why chapter 20? Because you need, for instance, one of those prophets in that chapter who has not bowed the knee to Baal. All of a sudden Elijah gets set on the shelf. And another guy takes the front stage. And then Elijah is brought back into the story.

I’m not going to go into Naboth’s vineyard. It’s a sad, sad story.

Anyway, Ahab’s death at Merah. *The international scene*. Let me just say a couple of words. Israel and Damascus and Judah knew that the threat on the horizon was Assyria. And they made themselves known to that. Why did they make themselves known?

Well look, this is the land of Israel, North and South, okay. And Syria is over there. And there’s Damascus. And so what’s going to happen is that Syria is going to come along and wreak havoc on Damascus, and then the North, and then the South. And they were doing that sort of thing. Shalmaneser was ruler at that time. And they were making themselves known that “we’re tough stuff.”

But they weren’t tough enough, because in the annals of Assyria find where Shalmaneser says that he went against Damascus and Israel. But he knows he’s not powerful enough to do what he’s doing, to enact world dominion. So he retreats. And actually what happens is that Damascus and the North pay tribute to Shalmaneser. And Shalmaneser retreats and consolidates power. And Israel and Judah have a 100-year reprieve before he comes back and takes the North in 722. Okay?

So more kings and prophets. I’ll just go through this. Ahaziah rules for one year; he’s in Israel. This is about the time that Elijah ascends into heaven and Elisha succeeds him. Joram reigns for nine years in Israel.

This is the time when Elisha and Naaman come together. Remember that Naaman has leprosy and Elisha—well, Elisha is a strange guy, a really strange guy. He’s just a different sort of figure.

Do you remember when Gehazi is his servant? And the woman builds him an upper room. And there’s a scene where the woman is summoned. And Elisha talks to his servant Gehazi and says, “*What shall we do for the woman?*” But he’s not talking to the woman. He’s talking to Gehazi while the woman is standing there.

And the same thing happens with Naaman. He doesn’t talk to Naaman. He tells his servant to go tell Naaman what to do. He’s kind of an interesting, eccentric figure. But Elisha is a great figure, really greater than Elijah.

But this is what I want you to notice. A Hazael replaces Ben-Hadad. Go with me to 2 Kings—2 Kings chapter 8.

“Now Elisha came to Damascus. Ben-Hadad the king of Syria was sick. And when it was told to him, ‘The man of God has come here,’ the king said to Hazael, ‘Take a present with you, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD through him, saying, ‘Shall I recover from this illness?’”

And so Hazael goes to the prophet Elisha. And he asks him, “*Shall the king recover?*” And Elisha looks at him and says, “*The king shall recover, but he will die.*” And then he looks at Hazael until it’s almost embarrassing. And Hazael says, “Hey, what are you looking at?”

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And he said, “The Lord is showing me right now what you as king of Damascus are going to do to my people.” And then the prophet starts to weep, because he realizes that the man who is going to persecute his people is standing right in front of him.

And remember, Hazael goes back to the king, and he says, “Well?” And Hazael says, “He says that you will recover.” And what he does is that he wraps some wet sheets behind the king’s head and kills him, and then he becomes king. And then he commits the atrocities.

Here’s the thing I want to say to you. How many of us, if the Lord decided to show us immediately that the man standing before us was going to kill our family, how many of us would end that man’s life right there and then, so that he wouldn’t have an opportunity to do that? I mean, that is the analogous situation. And yet Elisha is a man who understands that what he is being shown is the word of God. And as much as it kills him, he’s content with it.

And you know, I think to myself, this is an excellent example of what it means to be under the word of God.

Brave Man: Amen.

And then Jehoram reigns seven years in Judah. And then this takes us to Jabin, 27 years in Israel. He’s actually the fourth dynasty. We’re talking about the berserker. *(Laughter)* And we’ll see why the next time. *(Laughter)* Do you have any thoughts or questions before we close out today? No?

Okay. Well, I won’t see you next week. I’ll see you the week after. May the Lord bless you. We’ll still have the Bible study. And let me say this to you. *(Snapping his fingers)* Ted is on. *(Laughter)* And Ted is going to talk to you about how lard lollipops were formed in the 14th century. *(Laughter)*

Ted: Actually, that’s true. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: There we go with candy again. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: What’s that? Oh, the man and his candy! *(Laughter)* All right, let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time. Thank You, Lord, for Your word, and how we not only learn about redemptive history, but thank You for what You teach us, the practical lessons along the way. Help us, Father, to learn them well, and help us to follow Your hand always, which is the safest place to be. So remind us of where we are and who we are in Christ Jesus. And we pray in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*