

1 Kings 16:29 – 22:53: Ahab and Elijah

Lesson 2

Key Verse

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

—Romans 8:28

Key Verse Thought: Have you ever had something bad happen to you? According to this verse, if we are Christians (have Jesus in our heart), and are living according to God's Word doing what God wants us to do with our lives, everything will work out for good — even if it seems like something bad at the time. In this lesson, we will see this lived out in Elijah's life. Even when the king and queen wanted Elijah dead, God provided for him and took care of him.

Emphasis: If we will obey God, God will provide for us and take care of us — no matter what.

Lesson Summary: Now that we have seen the nation of Israel divide into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, we will begin by studying the nation Israel. We will continue with Judah afterward. In our last lesson, we began by learning about the first three kings of Israel — Jeroboam, Nadab, and Baasha. Israel never had a good, or godly, king. In this lesson, we will continue with the next six kings — including one of the worst kings and his wicked queen.

After seeing four more wicked kings (Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri), we come to the worst king yet — King Ahab. After he became king, God sent His prophet, Elijah, to speak to wicked King Ahab. Elijah told the king that there would be no rain in the land; and there was a drought for over three years. God provided for Elijah during the drought and sent him back to King Ahab after three years with a great challenge. Elijah had all of Israel to meet on top of Mount Carmel to call for a decision from the people. Choose who the true God is. After Elijah's mighty victory, he ran for his life. We see God had not forgotten him, but He showed himself to Elijah in a still small voice. He then gave Elijah a helper, Elisha. We will learn more about him in our next lesson.

We will continue with King Ahab's wicked reign as Benhadad, king of Syria, besieged Israel. God mightily delivered — twice. However, because King Ahab spared the enemy king's life, God would require King Ahab's life.

We see more of Queen Jezebel's wickedness as she kills to acquire Naboth's vineyard for her husband, King Ahab. When Elijah told King Ahab of God's displeasure about this event, we will see the compassion God had upon King Ahab when he was sorry for sin.

When King Ahab joined with the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, to enter into battle with Syria, a prophet of God told King Ahab that he would die in battle — and he did. King Ahab's son, Ahaziah, became the next king of Israel. He, too, was a wicked king.

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

- Monday: 1 Kings 16-17
- Tuesday: 1 Kings 18
- Wednesday: 1 Kings 19
- Thursday: 1 Kings 20
- Friday: 1 Kings 21
- Saturday: 1 Kings 22

1 Kings 16:29 – 22:53: Ahab and Elijah

1. Wicked Kings of Israel: 1 Kings 16
 - Elah
 - Zimri
 - Tibni
 - Omri
 - Ahab
2. Elijah with God versus the Prophets of Baal: 1 Kings 17-19
 - Elijah tells King Ahab there will be no rain
 - Elijah's challenge
 - God's victory
 - God encourages Elijah
3. Wicked King Ahab: 1 Kings 20-21
 - The besiege of Benhadad, king of Syria
 - Naboth's vineyard
4. Ahab's Demise; Ahaziah Reigns: 1 Kings 22
 - King Ahab's death
 - Ahaziah becomes king

Note: In our last lesson, we found that because the people rejected God, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. Because they became two separate kingdoms, we will primarily study the nation Israel first and Judah next. We have learned about the first three kings of Israel (the Northern Kingdom): Jeroboam, Nadab, and Baasha. In 1 Kings 16, we read about five more kings. One important thing to remember is that Israel (the Northern Kingdom) never had a good king.

1. The Wicked Kings of Israel: 1 Kings 16

We read about the first three kings of Israel in our last lesson. See they are described as kings whom: “...**did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin**” (1 Kings 15:26). Remember that King Jeroboam made two golden calves, one in Dan and the other in Bethel, for the people to worship so that they would not return to the Temple in Jerusalem. This was sin in God’s eyes. Notice that each king after Jeroboam was compared back to him. We ended our last lesson with Baasha as king of Israel. Read what God thought of this king in 1 Kings 16:1-4, and then read of his death in 1 Kings 16:6. In today’s lesson, we will meet five more kings of Israel from 1 Kings 16.

Elah: When Baasha died, his son Elah became king (1 Kings 16:8). Elah’s servant, Zimri, conspired against him. Zimri was captain of half his chariots. After conspiring against him, Zimri killed him, becoming king in his stead (1 Kings 16:9-10).

Zimri: As soon as Zimri became king, he killed the entire house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord (1 Kings 16:11-13). Why did he do this? “**For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities**” (1 Kings 16:13). Zimri was king for seven days. When the people heard that he killed Elah to become king, they made Omri their king. When the people did this, Omri went (and all of Israel with him) to besiege Tirzah. When Zimri saw the city was taken, he went into the palace of the king’s house and burned it — while he was still inside, killing himself (1 Kings 16:18). It was the Lord’s will that he die. Why? “**For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin**” (1 Kings 16:19). However, there was a division among the people.

Tibni: Half of the people followed Tibni to make him king, but the other half followed Omri. “But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned” (1 Kings 16:22).

Omri: The people made Omri king and he reigned for twelve years. He bought a hill in Samaria and built a city. “25. But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that *were* before him. 26. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities” (1 Kings 16:25-26). Omri died and his son, Ahab, reigned in his stead.

Ahab: Ahab, son of Omri, reigned over Israel for 22 years. “30. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him. 31. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kings 16:30-33). As we will find in our study, Ahab was a wicked king with a very wicked wife.

A Deeper Path: Notice that each generation seemed to be worse than the generation before them. When they rejected God and His commandments, the land filled with “darkness.” See what Jesus said in John 3:19: “**And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**”

Remember that Jesus came to set us free from that darkness to walk as His dear children in Him (the Light). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Ephesians 5:8).

A Christian cannot walk in “darkness” (sin). “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6).

As Christians (God’s people), we are to be different — not like the “nations” around us (as Israel’s kings chose to be). “17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:17-18).

2. Elijah with God Vs. the Prophets of Baal: 1 Kings 17-19

We are introduced to a prophet of God in 1 Kings 17 named Elijah. He went to King Ahab with these words: “*As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word*” (1 Kings 17:1b). Moreover, there was no rain or dew in the land of Israel for over three years. Nevertheless, God took care of His prophet. God sent him to the brook Cherith where he had water. God sent ravens that brought him bread and flesh every morning and evening. When the brook became dry, God sent him to Zarephath, a city that belonged to Zidon (see 1 Kings 17:9). If you remember, Jezebel’s father was the king of the Zidonians. It is interesting that God hid Elijah from King Ahab and Jezebel in the land from which Jezebel came. To see God’s provision for His prophet by the widow of Zarephath during the rest of the drought in Israel, read 1 Kings 17:8-24.

In the third year of the drought, God sent Elijah back to see King Ahab — for God would send rain upon the earth again (see 1 Kings 18:1). Elijah went. Ahab received a message to meet Elijah. When Ahab met with Elijah, he said “*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*” (1 Kings 18:17b). Elijah’s response? “*I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim*” (1 Kings 18:18). Elijah had a message. All of Israel was to gather at Mount Carmel along with the prophets of Baal. (There were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves of Baal that ate at Jezebel’s table, see 1 Kings 18:19.)

When all of the people and the prophets gathered upon Mount Carmel, Elijah addressed the people. He had a question for them: “*...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him ...*” (1 Kings 18:21). The people answered him not a word. Stop for a minute at this point in the recollection. Is not this the crux of the matter — even today? We must not let our allegiance “halt between to opinions.” We are required to make a choice and then live accordingly. The nation of Israel had not made their choice, so Elijah presented them a challenge.

22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even I only*, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men. 23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for

themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: 24. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. (1 Kings 18:22-24)

Take note that the people agreed to the challenge. The prophets of Baal prepared their offering. They proceeded to call upon the name of Baal from morning until noon. However, there was no answer “... *And they leaped upon the altar which was made*” (1 Kings 18:26b). The word *leaped* means “to dance in a halting or lame manner; to leap.” Neither their cries nor their dances caused any response — except from Elijah. He began to mock them. “*Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked*” (1 Kings 18:27b). This caused the prophets of Baal to cry aloud and cut themselves with knives and lancets until the blood gushed out (1 Kings 18:28). But did they get *any* response? “*And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded*” (1 Kings 18:29). There was no response whatsoever from anyone or anything.

Now that it was time for the offering of the evening sacrifice, it was Elijah’s turn. He called all of the people together. He began by repairing the broken down altar of the Lord. Notice that there was no need to repair the altar of Baal, only the altar of God. This helps us understand the priority of the people in the land. Elijah took twelve stones (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) and rebuilt the altar in the name of the Lord. He then made a trench around the altar, placed the wood in order, cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it out upon the altar. He then called for four barrels of water to pour upon the sacrifice and wood. He had them do this three times, pouring twelve barrels of water upon the sacrifice and wood, which filled the trench around the altar as well. Remember that this was a time of drought in the land. Read what happened next.

36. *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 of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.* 37. Hear

me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again. (1 Kings 18:36-37)

With that prayer, “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench” (1 Kings 18:38). The people fell upon their faces and said, “The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God” (1 Kings 18:39b). However, professing God was not enough. They had to eliminate the Baal worship with its false priests. Elijah commanded them to take all 850 prophets of Baal and kill them — and they were not to let even one escape.

Elijah then told King Ahab to get up, eat, and drink because there was a sound of abundance of rain. While Ahab went to eat and drink, Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed. He sent his servant to go look toward the sea. He sent his servant seven times. On the seventh time, Elijah’s servant saw a small cloud — about the size of a man’s hand. Elijah sent a message to Ahab to prepare his chariot — it was fixing to rain. The sky grew dark, the wind blew, and there was a great rain. Elijah ran and beat Ahab and his chariot back to town (1 Kings 18:41–46).

When Ahab got home, he told his wife Jezebel all that Elijah had done, but especially about Elijah killing all of the prophets of Baal. Consequently, Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah by the following day. Read how discouraged Elijah was — so much so that he ran away to hide. Nevertheless, read of the encouragement God gave him, speaking to Elijah not with a great wind, an earthquake, or a fire, but in a still small voice. A voice that gave Elijah the encouragement he needed to continue doing what God required. When Elijah thought he was all alone, the only one left serving God, God told him there were 7,000 in Israel who had never served Baal (1 Kings 19). God even gave him a fellow servant, Elisha, which we will learn more about in our next lesson.

A Deeper Path: Once again we see the angel of the Lord (1 Kings 19:5, 7). If you remember, 2 Samuel 24 was the last time we saw the angel of the Lord. There, David saw the angel with a drawn sword preparing to destroy Jerusalem. Before that, the angel of the Lord had not appeared since he appeared to Samson’s parents (when he told them Samson would be born). The angel of the Lord appears here when Elijah is fleeing for his life from Queen Jezebel and her

threat to kill him by the next day (1 Kings 19:1–3). He fled for a day’s journey into the wilderness, wanting to die, where he stopped under a juniper tree and slept. An angel then touched him and told him to eat. He ate then went back to sleep. The angel of the Lord came to him a second time, woke him, and told him to eat. Elijah ate and went in the strength of those meals 40 days and 40 nights unto Horeb, the mount of God. That was where God spoke to Elijah in a still small voice. This is a great instance of angels as “ministering spirits” (see Hebrews 1:13-14: “13. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”).

3. Wicked King Ahab: 1 Kings 20-21

Benhadad, King of Syria, and 32 other kings came and besieged Samaria. They sent a message to King Ahab: all of the silver, gold, wives, children, and every thing good were to be Benhadad’s. King Ahab agreed to surrender it all. However, when Benhadad wanted to come into the city to take the possessions, King Ahab said no. Consequently, Benhadad and his men prepared to besiege the city. Nevertheless, God sent a prophet to King Ahab with news that God would deliver His people “... and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD” (1 Kings 20:13b). They won the battle, but God warned that the next year, Syria would come against Israel again. The next year, Benhadad went again to fight against Israel. Israel won the battle again, but King Ahab spared Benhadad’s life. Because of this, God said Ahab’s life would be for his life. “And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased ...” (1 Kings 20:43a).

Naboth had a vineyard next to King Ahab’s palace. King Ahab asked Naboth to give him the vineyard. King Ahab offered either a better vineyard, or even money, for Naboth’s vineyard. However, Naboth refused to give it to the king because it was his inheritance. King Ahab returned home displeased, lay upon his bed, turned his face away, and would not eat. Jezebel came and asked what was wrong with him. He told her that Naboth would not give him the vineyard that he wanted. Jezebel told him to get up and eat — for she would get Naboth’s vineyard for him.

Jezebel wrote letters in King Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal. She ordered two men to lie about Naboth. When this happened, they took Naboth was out of the city and stoned him. When Jezebel received word that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, she went to her husband, King Ahab, and told him to go and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth. The same

vineyard Naboth refused to give King Ahab for money. When King Ahab heard Naboth was dead, he went to take possession of the vineyard. God told Elijah to go down to meet King Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. God had a message for King Ahab. When Elijah met King Ahab, "Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? ..." (1 Kings 21:20a). Read the message God had for King Ahab.

20b. ... because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. 21. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, 22. And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin. 23. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. (1 Kings 21:20b-24)

Death would come to Ahab and all of his family because of his proliferation of idolatry. Notice something very interesting God brings to our attention in 1 Kings 21:25: "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Ahab was set apart from all others for his great wickedness, but notice to whom this is accredited — Jezebel, Ahab's wife. The words **stirred up** mean "to stimulate; seduce, or entice." Jezebel was the one who *helped* King Ahab become so wicked.

However, see what happened when King Ahab was rebuked. "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (1 Kings 21:27). He was sorry for his sin. Moreover, God saw and said "... because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house" (1 Kings 21:29b). God had compassion upon King Ahab.

A Deeper Path: After reading about King Ahab and the negative influences his wife Jezebel had upon his life and kingdom, does that help you understand why God commanded them to destroy, not marry, the people of the land? Remember what we read in Deuteronomy 7:1-3: “1a. When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee ... 2. And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3a. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them ...”. Also remember the commandment we have in the New Testament. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

4. Ahab’s Demise; Ahaziah Reins: 1 Kings 22

King Ahab, king of Israel, joined with Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, to fight against Syria. God warned King Ahab through His prophet that he would die in this battle. When they went into battle, the king of Syria commanded his 32 captains to “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel” (1 Kings 22:31). The soldiers pursued a king, but when they realized it was the king of Judah, they withdrew from him. “And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness ...” (1 Kings 22:34a). Even though King Ahab had disguised himself, he was killed during this battle — just as God said.

“So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead” (1 Kings 22:40).

Ahaziah: “51. Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. 52. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: 53. For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done” (1 Kings 22:51-53).

1 Kings 16-22 at a Glance:

Chapter 16: **Elah**, son of Baasha began to reign over Israel, **Zimri** killed him and reigned in his stead, but he reigned only 7 days; half of Israel made **Tibni** king and the other half made

Omri king – Tibni was killed, so Omri reigned for 12 years, a worse king than any before him; **Ahab**, his son, became king and reigned for 22 years and was worse than any king before him; he took Jezebel for his wife, went, served and worshiped Baal and (vs.33) “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

Chapter 17: Elijah told king Ahab there would be no dew or rain until he said; God told Elijah to hide at the brook Cherith, and God commanded the ravens to feed him; when the brook dried up, God sent him to Zarephath; the widow made a cake and they were fed throughout the famine; the widow’s son died; Elijah raised him from the dead — and she then knew he was a man of God

Chapter 18: After three years, God sent Elijah to tell Ahab that God would send rain; Elijah sent a message to Ahab to meet him; Elijah made his challenge to Ahab — meet on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal; the true God would send fire to consume the offering; the prophets of Baal failed, God sent fire, consuming Elijah’s offering; Elijah killed 850 prophets of Baal; Elijah prayed & God sent rain after three years of drought

Chapter 19: Jezebel threatens Elijah’s life when she heard he killed all of her prophets of Baal; Elijah ran to the wilderness where he thought he was the last prophet; God spoke to him, not in the earthquake, fire or wind, but in a still small voice; God told him there were 7000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal; God sent him to find Elisha, and Elisha followed Elijah.

Chapter 20: Benhadad, king of Syria, (with 32 other kings) sent & took all of the silver, gold, & anything good (including wives and children) they wanted. Ahab (wanting peace) allowed it. But the next time they came, Ahab stood ready to fight – a prophet gave him a word from the Lord: God would deliver them “and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.” The Israelites defeated the Syrians, but Benhadad escaped. Ahab was told the king of Syria would come up again, because Benhadad didn’t recognize God only, the Syrians would be defeated again, and they were; Because Ahab then spared Benhadad’s life, God said his life would go for Benhadad’s life.

Chapter 21: Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard; Jezebel got the vineyard for Ahab by having Naboth wrongly put to death; when Ahab went to enjoy his vineyard, God sent Elijah by with a message that evil would come upon his house, Ahab & Jezebel would both die, the dogs

would lick up their blood & eat Jezebel; Ahab rent his clothes, sat in sackcloth and fasted; God saw and promised the evil would come in Ahab's son's day.

Chapter 22: Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, came to Ahab to enquire of the Lord if they should go to battle against Syria; 400 prophets said to go, God would deliver; Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of God, Micaiah came and gave a go ahead. God sent a lying spirit for God had spoken evil concerning Ahab; Micaiah was put in prison for his words; Ahab was afraid of dying so he disguised himself and they entered into battle; the king of Syria commanded his men to only go after the king of Israel, Ahab; when they realized it was Jehoshaphat they were pursuing, they quit, and a man happened to shoot an arrow and it hit Ahab, wounding him to death and the dogs licked his blood

Reinforcement: As we have seen in our lesson today, even though the nation as a whole had turned to idol worship, there were still those who had not forsaken God. “**Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal ...**” (1 Kings 19:18a). Elijah was a great example of God providing for one who was willing to give his life wholly to serve God, obeying His every command. Remember the encouragement God gave to Elijah when he was greatly discouraged — and even fearful for his life. Remember today's Key verse — especially, that all things will work together for good if one is living the life God would have them live. Also, remember the tragic ending to King Ahab's life for not only turning his heart from God, but helping to turn others' hearts from God as well.

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer, reinforcing today's lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will obey God, no matter what, trusting that God will provide for our every need.*