

A KINGDOM DIVIDED

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Study 1: A Kingdom Divided

Background

- a. God's promise to David (**2 Samuel 7:11-16**)

- b. Judgement on Solomon (**1 Kings 11: 4-6, 9-13**)

- c. God's word to Jeroboam (**1 Kings 11:26-40**)

Read 1 Kings 12:1-24

1. What request did the people of Israel make? (v4)

2. What do you think of the elders' counsel? (v7)

3. What do you think of the young men's counsel? (v10-11)

4. Why do you think Rehoboam didn't listen to the people and the elders?

5. Are you surprised Israel were so quick to rebel against the house of David? (v16)

6. The rebellion nearly led to civil war. How was the situation resolved?

7. List all those responsible for the division of the kingdom.

8. Who at the time knows this is God's doing?

9. How does this incident demonstrate the interplay of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility?

We see the actions of wicked men fulfilling God's purposes most clearly at the cross. Read John 19:10-11, Acts 2:22-24. How do these New Testament writers help us understand this?

Now read Acts 4:23-31. How were the early believers encouraged by this truth?

How can we be encouraged by this reminder of the sovereign hand of God to bring about his plans?

Bonus:

God's people today are from many nations, belonging to a Kingdom that is not of this world. Is God's hand still active in the rise and fall of earthly rulers? How does knowledge of God's sovereignty affect our response to the authorities we live under? (See Romans 13:1-6)

Study 2: The Sin Of Jeroboam

Background

God's promise to Jeroboam (**1 Kings 11:37-38**)

Read 1 Kings 12:25-33

1. What did Jeroboam do that became a sin? (v28-30)
2. Why did he do it? (v26-27)
3. What other things did he do that compounded his sin? (v31-33)
4. What do you expect God to do?

***Can you think of a time in your life when insecurity and fear have led to sin?
What promises of God can we believe to prevent such things happening
again?***

Read 1 Kings 13:1-10

5. What message did the man of God bring to Jeroboam? (v2)
6. What sign was given to support his word? (v3-5)

7. What instruction had the man of God received? (v9)

Read 1 Kings 13:11-32

8. What is the consequence for the man of God of disobeying God's command? (v21-24)

9. What conclusion does the old prophet draw? (v26, 32)

Whether you are a king, a prophet, or an ordinary person, what is the consequence of disobeying God? What should we do when confronted by our disobedience? What hope do we have in Jesus? (See 1 John 1:8-9)

Read 1 Kings 13:33-34

10. What does Jeroboam do?

Jeroboam was handed the kingdom because of Solomon's sin. He has now gone on to lead Israel into even worse disobedience. How do you feel about his actions? What does Jesus say about those who cause others to sin? (See Luke 17:1-2). Does your example lead others to obedience or disobedience? How can we help one another to grow in trust and obedience?

Study 3: Two Evil Kings

Jeroboam, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 14:1-20

1. What prompts Jeroboam to seek out one of God's prophets? (v1-3)

2. How is the message from God described? (v6)

3. Why is God angry with Jeroboam? (v7-9)

4. What are the consequences for
 - a. Jeroboam's son?

 - b. Jeroboam's descendants & dynasty?

 - c. Jeroboam's people (Israel)?

Rehoboam, King in Judah

Read 1 Kings 14:21-31

5. How well did Judah follow God under Rehoboam?

6. Is Rehoboam held responsible for that?

7. Out of all the things that happened during Rehoboam's 17-year reign, why do you think the plundering by Shishak king of Egypt is reported?

What hopes do you have for Israel and Judah as the kingdoms pass to the sons (v20, 31)?

We are told that Judah provoked the Lord to jealousy (v22). Why is God jealous for his people? Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22. What were the Corinthians doing that may provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are there things we do that are similar?

Read John 4:19-26 and John 14:6. What does Jesus teach the Samaritan woman about true worship? Does it matter how we worship God? What difference does having Jesus as our king make to our worship of God?

Study 4: Like Father, Like Son?

Abijam, King in Judah

Read 1 Kings 15:1-8

1. In what ways was Abijam like his father? (v3, 6-7)
2. Why does God allow the succession to continue?

Asa, King in Judah

Read 1 Kings 15:9-24

3. Why is verse 11 such a relief to us?
4. What does Asa do right?
5. Would this have been easy for him?
6. What do you think of his deal with King Ben-Hadad of Syria? Why do you think the writer includes it?

Nadab, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 15:25-26

7. How do you feel reading these verses? What do you want God to do?

Read 1 Kings 15:27-32

8. How is God's word of judgement against Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:10) carried out?

9. Are you cheering for Baasha? Why/why not?

We have to wait until next week to see if Baasha will be any better than the king he deposed.

To what extent have these kings been 'like father, like son'? How can ungodly, destructive legacies be broken? Have you seen the power of God work in your family to transform and change?

What can the church do to try and safeguard the truth from one generation to the next? (See 1 Timothy 1:13-14, 1 Timothy 2: 1-2, Philippians 3:17-4:1).

Pray for the church around the world to faithfully proclaim the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus among the next generation. Especially pray for believers in countries where holding fast to the knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness (Titus 1:1) is increasingly unpopular.

Study 5: Four Kings in Israel

Baasha, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 15:33-16:7

1. What is recorded for us about Baasha's reign? (v34)
2. How and why did God's judgement come upon him? (v2-4, 7)
3. Baasha's destruction of Jeroboam's family fulfilled God's word of judgement (15:29). So why was Baasha punished for it?

Elah, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 16:8-14

4. What is recorded for us about Elah's reign?
5. How and why did God's judgement come upon him?

Zimri, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 16:15-20

6. What is recorded for us about Zimri's reign?
7. How and why did God's judgement come upon him?

Omri, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 16:21-28

8. What is recorded for us about Omri's reign?
9. Omri looks like a successful king. He was popular (v16), successful in battle (v22), resourceful (v24) and reigned unchallenged. Why is it important that God's assessment of him is recorded?

What would it have been like to live in the land of Israel during this time? (See 15:32; 16:9, 15-16, 21.) What is the spiritual state of Israel under these kings? (See v2, 13, 19, 26). What does Israel need?

Does it seem fair to you that the king who 'did more evil than all who were before him' (v25) reigned 12 years then 'slept with his fathers'? Why is God's judgement sometimes obvious and other times not?

Read Romans 1:18-32. What happens to humanity when God is rejected? What hope is there? (See Romans 3:21-26, Romans 5:1-2.) Who can you be praying for and telling of the hope found under the rule of Christ?

Study 6: Introducing Ahab & Elijah

Ahab, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 16:29-34

1. What did Ahab do that was more evil than all the kings before him?
(v31-33)

2. The background to verse 34 is Joshua chapter 6. Why do you think our writer includes it here?

Elijah, Prophet in Israel

Read 1 Kings 17:1-7

3. What was Elijah's word for Ahab?(v1)

4. What provision did God make for his prophet? (v3-6)

5. What do we know about Elijah from these verses?

Read 1 Kings 17:8-16

6. How did Elijah demonstrate faith?

7. What was the widow's situation when Elijah met her?

8. Was Elijah's request a small thing?

9. How did the widow demonstrate faith?

10. What provision did God make for his prophet?

Read 1 Kings 17:17-24

11. Who does the widow blame for the death of her son? (v18) Can you relate to that response?

12. What do Elijah's response and prayers tell us about him?

13. When she saw her son alive, what conclusion did the widow come to?

14. How was Elijah's presence in the household a blessing?

Read John 11:17-27, 38-45. What was demonstrated when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? What conclusions did the people come to?

Would you like your prayers to be powerful like Elijah? What does James 5:13-18 say to us about that?

Elijah's presence brought blessing to the household at Zarephath. Who can you bless with the word of God this week?

Study 7: Baal Exposed

Read 1 Kings 18:1-19

1. What do we learn about Ahab from these verses?
2. Who does Obadiah fear?
3. Why does Ahab consider Elijah to be a troublemaker?
4. Who has really brought trouble upon Israel?

Read 1 Kings 18:20-40

5. What is the purpose of the challenge? (v21)
6. What were the rules of the 'contest'? (v23-24)
7. How might the people have been feeling as they waited for hours for Baal to respond?
8. What purpose did Elijah's preparations have? (v30-34)

9. In what ways was Elijah's petition different from the prophets of Baal?

10. How did God answer?

11. Did this settle the question of who the real God is? (v39-40)

12. Do you have high expectations that Israel will now return to the Lord?
Why/why not?

Read 1 Kings 18:41-46

13. If God's intention was to end the drought (see verse 1), why didn't God just send rain? Why have the confrontation first?

Are we ever like the Israelites, 'limping between two different opinions': sometimes following God, sometimes following false gods? What does that look like in our lives? Read John 20:30-31. What more do you need to see to believe? What does the Bible say to those who think they can serve God and themselves? (See Matthew 6:24 and James 4:1-10.)

We might not be an Elijah, but could we be an Obadiah? What good could you do this week if you feared God more than man?

Study 8: Elijah on the Run

Read 1Kings 19:1-8

1. Is Elijah's fear of Jezebel well founded? (Recall 17:4)
2. How does he feel in response to her threats?
3. What does he do in response to her threats?
4. What provision did God make for his prophet?

What is the significance of Mt Horeb to the Israelites? (See Exodus 3:1-12, Exodus 24:12-18). What do we hope might happen here?

Read 1 Kings 19:9-18

5. Twice the Lord asks Elijah "What are you doing here?" (v9,13). What reply does Elijah give? What emotions can you detect in his reply?
6. Has the Lord finished with Elijah?
7. Elijah feels completely isolated. Is he indeed the only faithful one left?

Read 1 Kings 19:19-21

8. What did Elisha give up to become Elijah's assistant?

Do you ever feel like giving up on ministry, faith or even life? What fears and perceptions lead you to that point? What words of truth and encouragement have brought you back?

Read Luke 9:57-62. How does Jesus reply those who would delay following him? What makes his mission more urgent than Elijah's? What have you given up to be a disciple of Jesus? What more might be expected of you?

Pray for one another and the challenges we face to be Jesus' disciples, especially those facing hardship or discouragement.

Study 9: The Lord Delivers Israel

Read 1 Kings 20:1-22

1. How and why does the situation between Ben-hadad and Ahab escalate?
2. Why does God grant victory to Israel? (v13)

Read 1 Kings 20:23-30

3. What was good about the advice the servants gave the king of Syria?
(v24-25)
4. What was wrong with the advice the servants give the king of Syria?
(v21)
5. How confident of victory would Ben-hadad have been? (v27)
6. Why did God grant victory to Israel? (v28)

Read 1 Kings 20:31-43

7. Why did Ahab let Ben-hadad go free?
8. Why was God not pleased with this?

9. What was King Ahab's mood as he returned home from the battle? (v43)

We have been told that Ahab did more evil than any king before him. He formalised the worship of Baal, even building a temple to Baal in his capital city. He let his wife seek out and kill the Lord's prophets. Why didn't God just abandon him to his enemies? Why did God still send prophets?

Israel was victorious in these battles so that they might know that the Lord is God (v13, 28). How does God make himself known to the world today? (See Hebrews 1:1-3, John 17:1-4, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

What part can you play this week in making God's glory and mercy known?

Study 10: How The King Governs Israel

Read 1 Kings 21:1-16

1. What was Ahab's offer to Naboth? (v2) Was it reasonable?
2. What was Naboth's response? (v3) Was it reasonable?
3. How did Ahab respond? (v4) Was he being reasonable?
4. What was Jezebel's solution? (v9-10)
5. What does the success of Jezebel's plan tell us about the state of justice in Israel under King Ahab?
6. What do you want to happen next?

Read 1 Kings 21:17-24

7. What word from God did Elijah bring?
8. Is your desire for justice for Naboth satisfied?
9. How do you expect Ahab to respond?

Read 1 Kings 21:25-29

10. How did Ahab respond to God's word of judgement? (v27)

11. Are you surprised?

12. What difference did his repentance make?

Like Naboth, we live in a society where often the powerful act unjustly and seem to get away with it. Throughout Scripture we are told God loves justice. His people are called to reflect that (Micah 6:8). We are also told not to take revenge on those who do us evil (Romans 12:17-21). And we have the assurance that one day justice will finally be done (Revelation 16:5-7, 19:1-2). Consider together the question of justice. How do we walk rightly before God in an unjust world?

Ahab repented! Are there people in your life who you think would never repent? Pray again for them today, that God in his mercy would bring them to repentance and faith.

Study 11: Walking in the Way of his Father

Read 1 Kings 22:1-12

1. What prompted this plan for battle?
2. What do we learn about Jehoshaphat from these verses? (v4, 6)
3. Do you think these prophets really thought they were speaking God's word?

Read 1 Kings 22:13-28

4. What was really God's word concerning the battle? (v17, 18 20, 28)
5. Verse 16 is interesting. Why do you think Ahab kept Micaiah around?
6. This has become a battle of the prophets. How will we know who spoke from God?

Read 1 Kings 22:29-40

7. Did Ahab have a good battle strategy? (v30, 31, 33)
8. How did God's word come to pass?
9. Does this seem like a fitting end for Ahab? Why/why not?

Jehoshaphat, King in Judah

Read 1 Kings 22:41-50

10. What is recorded for us about Jehoshaphat's reign?

11. Despite the intentions of the king, were the people of Judah wholehearted towards God? (v43)

Ahaziah, King in Israel

Read 1 Kings 22:51-53

12. What are we told about Ahaziah?

Both Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah are described as 'walking in the way of his father'. What is the danger in this? What example are we setting those who follow us?

Like the false prophets, there will always be those who claim to speak for God, but whose message is untrue (See 2 Timothy 4:1-5). How can we guard ourselves against their influence?

Throughout these chapters we have seen God keeping his word. In the midst of politics, wars, and idolatry God has not abandoned his people, and his word to David, Solomon, and each of the successive kings has come to pass. Thank God that he is faithful and true.