

October 8 – 1 Kings 20- 2 Kings 2

Ahab's Death and Elijah's Departure

Large Group Teaching Review

First Kings 20–22 describes the further reign of Ahab after his confrontation with Elijah. Although the full destruction of Ahab's house is delayed when he humbles himself before God (21:27–29), Ahab's own death, foretold by multiple prophets, is inevitable (22:29–40). Elijah returns to the scene in 2 Kings 1 to confront Ahab's son Ahaziah, and the prophet is then succeeded by Elisha in 2 Kings 2. At that point the events foretold in 19:15–17, which will bring to conclusion the long struggle against Baal worship, can come to pass.

In 1 Kings 20–2 Kings 2 we see God patiently bringing about his purposes for his people in judgment and salvation. These “bridge chapters” between 1–2 Kings also demonstrate the binding nature of prophetic oracles.

Gospel Glimpses

JUDGMENT AND MERCY. A recurring theme throughout these chapters is God's unwavering commitment to establish justice and to punish evil. On several occasions the equitable nature of justice is emphasized. Thus one prophet informs Ahab, “Your life shall be for his life” (1 Kings 20:42); another promises, “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick up your own blood” (21:19). At the same time, even wicked Ahab can receive mercy when he humbles himself before the Lord (21:27–29). The cross of Jesus Christ represents the ultimate expression of both God's judgment and his mercy, for at the cross God took the judgment of his people onto himself in the person of Christ. It was “his life for our life,” fulfilling God's commitment to justice while allowing for his free and inexhaustible expression of mercy toward all who humble themselves before it.

Whole-Bible Connections

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD. Throughout these chapters, God's work often confounds human wisdom and surpasses human strength. Battles are won through inexperienced servants leading the way (1 Kings 20:14); truth is revealed to Micaiah alone, while hundreds of other prophets are deceived by a lying spirit (1 Kings 22:13–28); multiple squads of 50 soldiers are not enough to secure the capture of Elijah (2 Kings 1:9–15). These events fit with a pattern throughout the Bible in which God often works through the weak, the ordinary, the outsider, in ways contrary to human wisdom and offensive to human expectation. One thinks of tiny David slaying the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17:47), God's reducing the size of Gideon's army (Judges 7), or Paul's assertion that God chose the weak to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27–28). In the language of Proverbs 21:31, “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.”

Theological Soundings

THE PROPHETIC WORD. Prophetic activity spikes once again in this “bridge” between 1 and 2 Kings (1 Kings 20:13–14, 22, 28, 41–43; 21:17–24; 22:13–28; 2 Kings 1:3–4, 15–16; 2:21–22) as various events are declared in advance by one of God’s prophets. The emphasis falls on the binding nature of prophetic oracles: whatever the prophets foretell must come to pass, and even the prophets themselves are subject to it (1 Kings 20:35–36; compare 1 Kings 13:11–34). The narratives recorded in this portion of the Bible evidence the truth of Lamentations 3:37 (“Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?”) and Isaiah 46:11 (“I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it”).

Small Groups

Opening Announcements

1. Get-to-know-you question: If you could swap lives with a character from any movie or book, who would it be?
2. FALL BREAK/EVENT! Final info needed

Prayer

Read Eph 3:14–19. Pray that each student would be strengthened in power through this study; that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith through this study, and that they might understand the love of God more and more.

Study Questions

Micaiah’s Prophecy and Ahab’s Death (ch. 22)

How do (good) Jehoshaphat and (evil) Ahab respond differently to the prospect of battle and Micaiah’s prophecy throughout 22:1–28? What does the treatment of Micaiah as the sole prophet of the Lord reveal about the spiritual state of Ahab, and of Israel under Ahab’s reign?

How do the details of Ahab’s death in 22:29–40 reflect God’s sovereignty and his commitment to fulfilling the word given to Micaiah?

Elisha Succeeds Elisha (2 Kings 2)

How do various details related in 2 Kings 2 reinforce the message that the mantle of Elijah's leadership and spiritual authority has been passed to Elisha? How do others react to them both? What are their common behaviors? What is the significance of Elisha's initial activity following Elijah's departure?

To modern readers, the judgments of fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:9–12) and mauling by bears (2:23–25) can seem harsh. But throughout 1 and 2 Kings, how people treat the Lord's prophets often reflects their deeper attitude toward the Lord himself. How might this insight help us understand the appropriateness of these events?

Application

1. Jehoshaphat and Ahab respond differently to the Word of God from Micaiah. Where do we access the Word of God? (The Bible) What does it look like for you to respond to the Word of God faithfully?
2. We have seen how the battle belongs to the Lord and that God's people are called to wait on Him, trust in His Word, and follow Him to victory. What does this look like in the life of a believer today?