

Early History of the Divided Kingdom

Year 2, Quarter 1

This study covers the period from the division of the kingdom (931 B.C.) through the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (753 B.C.). We will study the historical texts of 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 10-25, concentrating on the kings of Israel and Judah. We will also study the prophetic work of Elijah and Elisha as well as the literary prophets Obadiah, Joel and Jonah.

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Day 1: God's Covenant with Jeroboam

As a consequence of Solomon's idolatry, God now determines to divide the kingdom (1 Kgs 11:26-40), perhaps in an effort to forestall a slide into complete apostasy. Jeroboam, an official in Solomon's administration, is appointed by the prophet Ahijah as the one who will rule over the majority of the kingdom. In honor of the covenant with David, God will reserve rule over Judah for one of David's descendants. Jeroboam, however, is not content to let things develop naturally and revolts against Solomon. He is forced to flee to Egypt until Solomon dies.

1. Where would David "*have a lamp*" before Jehovah?
2. Upon what condition will God make for Jeroboam an enduring house?
3. What would God do to the descendants of David?

Day 2: Rebellion Against Rehoboam

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was 41 years old when he became king (1 Kgs 14:21), too old to blame his bad judgment on the immaturity of youth. His hard-line stance against Israel's request causes an immediate revolt and Jeroboam, according to God's word, becomes the rival king of Israel (1 Kgs 12:1-20). Rehoboam marches to war against the breakaway tribes but aborts when God forbids the action (1 Kgs 12:21-24).

4. How did the older counselors advise Rehoboam?
5. Who was Adoram and what happened to him?
6. Why did God forbid Rehoboam to fight against Israel and Jeroboam?

Day 3: The Corrupt Worship of Jeroboam

Jeroboam had no confidence in God or the covenant He had made with him, for he is afraid that Israel will return to Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12:26-27). To prevent this, he institutes his own system of worship which frees the northern nation from dependence upon Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12:28-33; 13:33-34). Note the phrases throughout this section: "*he set up*"; "*he made*"; "*Jeroboam ordained*"; etc. Jeroboam's corruption of the priesthood caused a mass migration of Levites from all over Israel to Judah (2 Chr 11:13-16). Jeroboam thus sets the tone of idolatrous disobedience for Israel which will endure through coming generations (see 1 Kgs 15:34; 16:2; 22:52; 2 Kgs 3:3; 10:29; 13:2; etc.).

7. What did Jeroboam put in Dan and Bethel?

8. Where did Jeroboam's system of worship come from (1 Kgs 12:33)?
9. What qualities made Jeroboam's worship more palatable to Israel?

Day 4: Judgment Against Jeroboam

God pronounced condemnation upon Jeroboam on two occasions. The first was a prophecy concerning events which would not occur for another 300 years (1 Kgs 13:1-10). A future king of Judah, Josiah, will destroy this very altar in Bethel and desecrate it by burning the bones of idolatrous Israelites upon it. This is precisely what happens (2 Kgs 23:15-16). The second condemnation of Jeroboam comes from Ahijah, the same prophet who told Jeroboam that he would be king (1 Kgs 14:1-18). Jeroboam's son becomes gravely ill and he sends his wife incognito to Ahijah to learn of his fate (when the going gets tough, Jeroboam has no confidence in his self-made idols or priests). Not only does Ahijah declare that the child will die, this is merely the beginning of miseries to fall upon the house of Jeroboam in coming generations. Because of Jeroboam's wickedness and its terminal infection of Israel, every male of Jeroboam's house would be cut off; Jeroboam's descendants will die in shame and disgrace; the Lord has appointed another king in the place of Jeroboam; and Israel would be uprooted from the land and scattered among the Gentiles. This is truly the beginning of the end for Israel, for no godly king will reign over the northern tribes before God fulfills this promise against them.

10. What was Jeroboam doing when the man of God came to Bethel?
11. How did Jeroboam threaten him? What happened to Jeroboam?
12. Who was worse in their disobedience, Jeroboam or Saul?

Day 5: Rehoboam's Unfaithfulness

Rehoboam's reign began successfully as he built fortified cities throughout Judah and built a strong royal family (2 Chr 11:5-12, 22-23). After three years of faithfulness, however, Rehoboam forsakes the Lord, and as a consequence Egypt invades Judah (2 Chr 11:17; 12:1-4). Duly chastised, Rehoboam repents and Jerusalem is spared the worst. Shishak, however, plunders both the temple and royal treasury (2 Chr 12:6-9).

13. How bad did Judah get under Rehoboam's rule (1 Kgs 14:22-24)?
14. What lesson did God want Judah to learn by serving Shishak (2 Chr 12:8)?
15. Where did Rehoboam go wrong (2 Chr 12:14)?

Day 1: Abijam's Short Reign

After Rehoboam's 17 year reign, the throne passed to his son Abijam who reigned only three years. Most of our information on Abijam concerns a great battle between Abijam and Jeroboam wherein Israel is dealt a stunning defeat (2 Chr 13). In an effort to gain the high moral ground, Abijam claims that Jeroboam has violated the Davidic covenant by wresting Israel from Rehoboam (13:4-7). As we know, this is inaccurate as God had made his own covenant with Jeroboam. However, Abijam is correct in his accusations against Jeroboam's worship (13:8-9). God gives the battle to Abijam and Judah and Israel suffers a crippling defeat with the loss of 500,000 soldiers. (By contrast, the U.S. lost less than 60,000 in the whole Vietnam war).

1. T/F God blessed Abijam because he was more godly than Jeroboam (1 Kgs 15:3-4).
2. How is Abijam mistaken in 2 Chr 13:10-12? Comment on worship and godliness.
3. What caused Jeroboam's death?

Day 2: Asa Assumes the Throne

Asa, the son of Abijam, was a righteous king and had a lengthy reign over Judah of 41 years. His reign began with ten years of peace due to his father's defeat of Israel, and Asa used this time to build fortified cities throughout Judah (2 Chr 14:1-7). Eventually, a threat came from Ethiopia; Zerah leads an army of one million men against Asa but is defeated by God in response to Asa's cry for help (14:8-15).

4. What spiritual lessons can be drawn from Asa's activities in 2 Chr 14:7?
5. What confidence did Asa have in God when faced with Zerah's vast army?

Day 3: Asa's Spiritual Revival

The prophet Azariah comes to Asa with encouraging words from God (2 Chr 15:1-7). The people had drifted from the law but God had graciously spared them when they petitioned Him for help. God now promises Asa that his reign will be blessed so long as he seeks God. Bolstered by these words, Asa embarks upon religious reform in Judah and Benjamin (15:8-19). Idols were removed from the land as were religious prostitutes (1 Kgs 15:12); Maachah, Asa's idolatrous grandmother and queen mother, is deposed and her idol destroyed; and the people sacrifice and renew their commitment to God.

6. What had Judah been without for a long time? What was one of the main functions of the priesthood?

7. What effect does the prophecy of Azariah have upon Asa?

Day 4: Asa's Treaty with Ben-Hadad

During hostilities with Israel under King Baasha, Asa's faith in God falters and he makes a treaty with the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad (2 Chr 16:1-6). Not only does Asa fail to seek God's protection, he pays for Ben-Hadad's services out of the temple and royal treasuries, he entices Ben-Hadad to violate the treaty he had made with Baasha, and Israel is attacked by a heathen nation. From a military point of view, the ploy is successful. However, God is not pleased.

8. What was Baasha building and why?

9. T/F Asa is the first to make a treaty with Ben-Hadad.

Day 5: The Rebellion of Asa

God sends another prophet to Asa, this time with words of rebuke rather than praise (2 Chr 16:7-10). The prophet, Hanani, questions why Asa relied upon God when the Ethiopians but took matters into his own hands when threatened by Baasha and Israel. This is a peculiarity of human behavior which has endured throughout all history. Satan can always suggest reasons why God *probably* won't help us *this* time, and we are all too ready to listen. In a timeless statement of God's loyalty and readiness to help man, Hanani declares, "*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him*" (16:9). Asa's obstinacy continues into his later years as his feet become diseased. He refuses to seek God's help but relies on his physicians instead (16:11-14).

10. Discuss the principle of reliance upon God. Is the use of insurance and medical science a lack of faith in God? When does reliance upon material things become disobedience?

11. Contrast Asa's reaction to Hanani's words with his reaction to Azariah's prophecy.

12. Who is God eager to help?

Day 1: Nadab

The entire history of the northern nation of Israel is a sad commentary of idolatry, moral degeneration and political treachery. Truly Jeroboam set the tone of rebellion and self-will and Israel never recovered a sense of true godliness. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, assumes control of Israel upon the death of his father, and the record of his ill-fated rule covers all of two verses: 1 Kgs 15:25-26. He was a clone of his father and was doomed to suffer the prophecy of Ahijah (1 Kgs 14:10-11). Nadab was assassinated by Baasha during the siege of a Philistine city (1 Kgs 15:27).

1. How long was Nadab's rule?
2. Nadab reigned concurrently with what king of Judah?

Day 2: Baasha

Baasha killed not only Nadab but every descendant of Jeroboam according to God's judgment against his family (1 Kgs 15:28-30). God, however, holds Baasha accountable for these murders (1 Kgs 16:7) for he acted upon his own motives rather than out of regard for God's will. Baasha enjoys a lengthy rule, 24 years, but his own wickedness brings the same judgment upon him as did Jeroboam's (1 Kgs 15:33-16:7).

3. Who delivered the prophecy against Baasha? Who was the prophet's father? To whom did the father prophesy (2 Chr 16:7)?
4. Describe the indignity and disrespect surrounding the death of Baasha's house.
5. T/F Baasha continued in the sins of Jeroboam.

Day 3: Elah and Zimri

The above scenario is repeated when Elah, the son of Baasha, assumes the throne and is then assassinated by his servant Zimri after two years (1 Kgs 16:8-14). Zimri, however, is not the popular choice as king, for the Israelites then declare Omri, commander of the army, to be king (1 Kgs 16:15-20). Zimri commits suicide when Omri attacks him in the city of Tirzah. All of the treachery, bloodshed and civil unrest is characteristic of a society which has abandoned the principles of righteousness.

6. What position of authority did Zimri hold?
7. What was Elah doing which made it all the easier for Zimri to kill him?

8. What did Zimri do after he had killed Elah?

9. How long did Zimri reign?

Day 4: Omri

Omri's rule over Israel did not go uncontested as Tibni secured the loyal following of half the nation (1 Kgs 16:21-28). Omri, however, prevailed and took sole possession of the throne; he reigned over Israel for twelve years.

10. Omri built a new capital city for Israel named _____.

11. How wicked was Omri?

12. Five kings of Israel have now come and gone during the reign of which Judean king?

Day 5: Ahab

When Omri's son, Ahab, assumes the throne, Israel plunges even deeper into degeneracy (1 Kgs 16:29-34). Idolatry is taken beyond Jeroboam's calf images of Jehovah to outright Baal worship. Ahab vigorously promotes Baal worship by building a temple to Baal in Samaria, establishing a Baal priesthood, and slaughtering Jehovah's prophets. To counteract Ahab's influence, God raises up a prophet of great courage and power, Elijah, who confronts this wicked king at every turn. *"The more mightily idolatry raised its head in the kingdom of Israel, the more powerfully did the Lord show to His people that He, Jehovah, and not Baal, was God and Lord in Israel ... In his (Elijah's - jj) person the spirit of Moses revived; he was the restorer of the kingdom of God in Israel, of which Moses was the founder..."* (C.F. Keil, **Commentary on 1 Kings**, Vol. 3, p. 231). Elijah becomes a "prototype prophet," the quintessential prophet who sets the standard for all who will follow. When the prophet would come to prepare the Jews for the Messiah, he would come *"in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"* (Lk 1:17). Most of the remainder of 1 Kings will be devoted to Ahab's rule.

13. Discuss the progressive nature of evil; consult 1 Kgs 16:31.

14. What was Jezebel's background?

15. What do we learn about God's word from 1 Kgs 16:34 (compare with 1 Kgs 6:1)?

16. What similarities existed between the prophet John's work and Elijah's work?

Day 1: The Drought

At God's command, Elijah announces the commencement of a drought upon Israel for Ahab's devotion to Baal (1 Kgs 17:1). This is a fitting punishment as Baal was a god of fertility with control over rain, wind and clouds (see lesson 1:2:7). God would thus demonstrate that He, not Baal, is in control of nature for the benefit of the nation. God sends Elijah into hiding, first to the wilderness east of the Jordan (1 Kgs 17:2-7), then to the region of Sidon where a Gentile widow would care for him (1 Kgs 17:8-16). The widow's kindness and faith are rewarded by the raising of her son from the dead by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24). This commences a period of numerous miracles which are designed to substantiate the prophetic warnings of judgment against Israel which will precede its eventual fall.

1. Why was it necessary for Elijah to hide (comp. 1 Kgs 18:10)?
2. What demand did Elijah make of the widow to test her faith in God?
3. What do tragedies often do to us (1 Kgs 17:17)?

Day 2: The Troubler of Israel

After three-and-a-half years of drought have ravaged the land (1 Kgs 18:1; Jas 5:17), God now tells Elijah to announce its conclusion to Ahab, and Elijah sends word to the king through his servant Obadiah to meet with him (1 Kgs 18:2-16). Ahab reacts consistently with those who are guilty of ungodliness and treachery: he blames the distress of the land upon Elijah when *he* is the cause of it (1 Kgs 18:17-19). Elijah calls for a meeting upon Mt. Carmel with all Israel and the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

4. What kind of a man was Obadiah?
5. Who was intent on massacring the prophets of Jehovah?
6. Discuss how people guilty of sin will turn the accusations around upon godly people.

Day 3: Showdown on Mt. Carmel

The location and circumstances of this challenge to Baal's prophets is especially appropriate as Mt. Carmel was a stronghold of Baal worship, Jezebel was the daughter of the Sidonian king (1 Kgs 16:31), and Baal was also the god of fire and is pictured with a thunderbolt in his left hand. Surely if Baal were the true God, he could show his power in such a tailor made setting. Elijah begins with a challenge to the convictions of the gathered Israelites: "*How long will you falter between two opinions?*" (1 Kgs 18:20-21).

They need to make up their mind who they will serve, and Elijah provides some evidence to assist them in their decision (1 Kgs 18:22-40). So dramatic and convincing is this display that the people not only confess Jehovah but at the command of Elijah capture the prophets of Baal for execution. Thus with his point emphatically made, Elijah prays for the resumption of rain (1 Kgs 18:41-46).

7. How many prophets of Jehovah stand with Elijah? Is right decided by numbers?
8. How would the true God be identified?
9. How did Elijah mock the prophets of Baal regarding their false notions of deity?
10. For what did Elijah pray before God's fire consumed the sacrifice?

Day 4: Elijah's Depression

Jezebel is neither intimidated nor impressed by the victory of Elijah and she threatens to kill him (1 Kgs 19:1-2). Elijah thus goes from fugitive to victor to fugitive again (1 Kgs 19:3-10). Under extreme emotional and physical distress, Elijah heads into the southern Judean wilderness in search of God's termination of his life. He feels that he has failed and that he cannot effectively combat the forces of evil. From his perspective, all appears lost and hopeless. God is aware of Elijah's human frailty and limitations; He sends an angel to provide sustenance for Elijah's journey. Elijah eventually makes his way to Mt. Horeb, or Sinai, "*the mountain of God*," where Moses stood before God about 700 years previously and pleaded for God spare the idolatrous Israelites fresh out of Egypt (Ex 32). Elijah, however, is in no mood to intercede for the people.

11. Describe the physical and emotional stresses upon Elijah. How do they affect him?
12. How does Elijah perceive himself? How has this weakened him?

Day 5: Elijah's Revival

God provides a demonstration which helps revive Elijah's flagging spirit (1 Kgs 19:11-13). The mountains are blasted and rocks split by a mighty wind; an earthquake shakes the ground beneath Elijah's feet; a raging fire sweeps past the mouth of the cave – yet the Lord does not reveal Himself in any of these. Instead, He speaks in a soft whisper. Perhaps Elijah placed too much emphasis upon the great contest at Carmel; perhaps he expected national repentance to follow the grand public victory. But such did not happen. God's work is often accomplished in less dramatic events. Elijah is told to go back and anoint two kings and a prophet whom God will use as instruments of punishment.

13. What question is twice asked of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:9, 13)? How might it apply to us?
14. Elijah is to anoint what Gentile king? What Israelite king? What prophet?

Day 1: The Syrian Wars

The reign of Ahab over Israel very nearly coincides with the reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah. During this period, Israel and Judah ally themselves against their common foe to the north – Syria. In the first Syrian threat (1 Kgs 20:1-22), Ahab is ready to capitulate to the Syrian king until he presses his demands too far. Though vastly outnumbered, Ahab resists Ben-Hadad and receives divine help in gaining the victory. In the spring of the following year, according to God's prophecy, the Syrians attack again (1 Kgs 20:23-34). Again, they are defeated by Israel, and Ben-Hadad negotiates a truce with Ahab.

1. What is Ahab's version of the maxim, "Don't count your chickens until they hatch"?
2. What did God want Ahab to know by the victory over the Syrians?
3. In what condition was Ben-Hadad when Israel attacked him?
4. What rationalization did the Syrians use to explain their defeat to Israel?

Day 2: Judgment Against Ahab

There is a marked increase in prophetic activity during the spiritual decline of Ahab's rule. While still basking in the warm glow of victory over Ben-Hadad, yet another prophet is sent to Ahab, this time with a message of condemnation for having failed to execute Ben-Hadad (1 Kgs 20:35-43). Not only had the Syrian king been "*appointed to utter destruction*," he would again rise up to threaten Israel. In his rebelliousness, Ahab killed the wrong people (the prophets of God) and kept alive the wrong people.

5. How did Ahab declare judgment against himself?
6. How did Ahab react to the prophet's message?

Day 3: The Murder of Naboth

The episode concerning Naboth (1 Kgs 21) is very enlightening as to the character of both Ahab and Jezebel. When Naboth refuses to sell the land of his ancestors, Ahab sulks like a child but Jezebel plots Naboth's murder in order to obtain the land for Ahab. Jezebel is so bold and powerful that she does not even have to resort to secrecy in order to murder Naboth; she commands the elders of Jezreel to proclaim a fast and falsely charge Naboth with blasphemy. This is speedily carried out and Naboth is stoned. Elijah is called upon again to confront Ahab's wickedness, and he pronounces judgment against the king even in the midst of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21:17-29). Ahab receives the same sentence passed upon Jeroboam and Baasha, and Jezebel is to be eaten by dogs by

the wall of Jezreel - quite an unforeseeable prediction given the current state of affairs. Ahab's contrition at this sentence does not merit a reprieve but does move God to delay the punishment to the lifetime of his son.

7. Compare 1 Kgs 21:1 and 21:18. To what does "Samaria" refer?

8. What was a primary factor in Ahab's wickedness?

9. What does Ahab think of Elijah?

Day 4: Micaiah and Ahab

Another snapshot from Ahab's life reveals the ongoing struggle between the king and the prophets of God (1 Kgs 22:1-28). In this instance, Syria has not relinquished control of Ramoth Gilead as per Ben-Hadad's promise (1 Kgs 20:34), and Ahab enlists the help of Jehoshaphat to recover the city. When Jehoshaphat urges that they seek the guidance of God, King Ahab trots out his puppets who advise him favorably. But Jehoshaphat recognizes that these are not Jehovah's prophets, and upon further inquiry Ahab begrudgingly admits that Micaiah is a prophet of God, *"but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil"* (1 Kgs 22:8). Reading between the lines, Micaiah was not a man who would tell Ahab what he wanted to hear but would tell him what *God said*. The messenger who summons Micaiah even begs for the prophet to keep the peace and parrot the lines of the other prophets, but Micaiah's response should be the anthem of every godly person: *"As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak"* (1 Kgs 22:14). Ahab has been in contradiction to God for so long that when Micaiah at first agrees with the prophets, Ahab immediately knows that he is being sarcastic. Micaiah then not only reveals Ahab's upcoming defeat and death, but he describes a heavenly scene wherein God has allowed Ahab to be deceived by his lying prophets. As repayment for his courage in speaking the truth, Micaiah is imprisoned.

10. How do you think Micaiah was described by those who wished to flatter the king?

11. What temptation is placed before Micaiah to speak something other than truth?

12. What was Zedekiah's reaction to Micaiah's prophecy and what would befall him?

Day 5: Ahab's Death

After a rule of about 21 years, Ahab finally meets his fate at the hands of the Syrians (1 Kgs 22:29-40). In partial fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy against Ahab (1 Kgs 21:19), dogs lick the king's blood as it is washed from his chariot. We will have a later observation on this prophecy when we study the reign of Jehu. Thus ends the life of the king who greatly accelerated Israel's decline into idolatry and hastened its demise.

13. How did Jehoshaphat nearly get himself killed in the battle?

Day 1: Jehoshaphat Reigns in Judah

While the reign of Ahab in Israel is concurrent with Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah, they couldn't have been more dissimilar in character. Jehoshaphat follows in the righteous footsteps of his father, Asa, and has great respect for God and His law (2 Chr 17:1-11). Jehoshaphat continues to oppose idolatry and banishes the sexually deviant from Judah (1 Kgs 22:46). Further, he provides for the teaching of the law in all the cities. God thus blesses Jehoshaphat and the nation with wealth and peace.

1. What covenant guaranteed Jehoshaphat's prosperity in his obedience to God?
2. To what specific task did Jehoshaphat assign certain priests, Levites and officials?
3. What did Jehoshaphat build throughout Judah (2 Chr 17:12)?

Day 2: Jehoshaphat's Alliance with Ahab

For all Jehoshaphat's wisdom, foresight and godliness, he displays one particular character flaw: he was too willing to make alliances with the wrong people in order to preserve peace. He contracts a marriage between his son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chr 18:1; 21:6), which will prove disastrous to Judah over the course of time. Jehoshaphat then allows himself to be drawn into battle with Ahab against the Syrians. Upon his return from the battle in which Ahab was slain, Jehoshaphat is confronted for this lack of judgment by the prophet Jehu: *"Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD"* (2 Chr 19:2)?

4. What had happened to Jehu's father when he criticized Asa's foreign alliance (16:7)?
5. Discuss this principle in light of 2 Cor 6:14.
6. How did God feel about Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 19:2-3)?

Day 3: Judicial Reform in Judah

To his credit, Jehoshaphat did not respond to prophetic reproof the way his father Asa did; instead, he renewed his efforts to improve the righteousness of the nation. He adds judicial reform (2 Chr 19:4-11) to the religious cleansing, military strength and fiscal soundness already in place. Justice and fairness begin with respect for God, thus the judges should take heed *"for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes."*

7. Why did Jehoshaphat go among the people from Beersheba to Ephraim?

8. The judgment in the affairs of men was really for whom?
9. Judges were appointed on what two levels?

Day 4: Victory over Foreign Invaders

When a huge force of Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and other heathens threatens Judah, Jehoshaphat humbles himself before God seeking divine protection (2 Chr 20:1-4). In his plea for help (2 Chr 20:6-12), Jehoshaphat reminds God that these people were originally spared by Israel at God's command; thus it is incumbent upon Him to protect them. God hears the prayers of the people and sends the prophet Jahaziel to comfort them: *"Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... You will not need to fight in this battle"* (2 Chr 20:14-17). As God promised, the invading army turns upon itself and all that is left is a multitude of corpses laden with valuables, so much so that it takes Judah three days to collect it all.

10. T/F Jehoshaphat acknowledges that God is ruler of Judah and Israel only.
11. How does Jehoshaphat know that the land belongs to Judah?
12. In whom does Jehoshaphat urge the people to believe?
13. What things did Judah do as the enemy neared (2 Chr 20:18-19, 21-22)?

Day 5: Footnotes to Jehoshaphat's Reign

Jehoshaphat did not completely learn from his folly of associating with Ahab, for he makes an alliance with Ahab's son, Ahaziah (2 Chr 20:35-37). Again, a prophet is sent to condemn his actions and God overthrows the fruit of the alliance. In spite of all that Jehoshaphat had done to revive and restore Judah spiritually, *"as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers"* (2 Chr 20:33). We will see this same pattern in later kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah. The wicked behavior of a king was a powerful, detrimental influence upon the nation, but the righteousness of a king did not guarantee that the subjects would loyally follow God.

14. How old was Jehoshaphat when he died?
15. Why do some in the Lord's church wish to compromise and associate with those who blatantly practice error?
16. Apply Jehoshaphat's limited influence over Judah to that of faithful Christians upon weak brethren. Does the influence of knowledgeable, mature elders guarantee a strong church?

Day 1: Elisha Succeeds Elijah

When we last saw Elijah, God had roused him from his depression and sent him to anoint Jehu as king over Israel, Hazael as king over Syria and Elisha as his successor. Before Jehu ascends the throne, however, Israel must endure two wicked sons of Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram. Elijah's last recorded work is the rebuke of Ahaziah and prophecy of his death from complications of an accidental fall (1 Kgs 22:51-53; 2 Kgs 1:1-4, 16-17). Finally, the great prophet of God is honored by a spectacular departure from the earth as witnessed by his junior associate, Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9-14). Elisha's work begins with two notable miracles, one benevolent and the other punitive (2 Kgs 2:19-25).

1. Of whom did Ahaziah plan to inquire about his prognosis?
2. How was Elijah divinely protected from Ahaziah's attempts to arrest him (2 Kgs 1)?
3. What does Elisha request from Elijah? Did he receive his request?
4. What did Elisha do with Elijah's mantle?

Day 2: Jehoram and the Moabite Rebellion

Jehoram, Ahaziah's brother, next reigns over Israel (2 Kgs 1:17; 3:1-3). We must be careful to differentiate between this Jehoram and Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, who will reign over Judah at the same time. Jehoshaphat now reenters the picture, *yet again* by making an alliance with the wicked king of Israel (2 Kgs 3:6-7). He had not learned his lesson by his two previous near-disasters, and he again finds himself in great distress (2 Kgs 3:9-14). God delivers Jehoram from the Moabites thus giving him evidence of His power and goodness and giving Elisha further credentials as a prophet. This, however, will not produce faith in Israel.

5. On whose account did Elisha see Jehoram?
6. What was a common reason for armies destroying themselves in these days (3:9, 23)?
7. What repulsive thing did the king of Moab do to end the battle (2 Kgs 3:27)?

Day 3: The Great Miracles of Elisha

2 Kgs 4:1-6:23 contains several notable miracles wrought by Elisha during the reign of Jehoram. Truly God did not leave Himself without witness during these dark days. Elisha cares for an indebted widow who is about to lose her sons to slavery (2 Kgs 4:1-7); he provides a son for the barren Shunammite woman and then restores him to life after

his premature death (4:8-37); he purifies poison food(4:38-41); he feeds 100 men with an inadequate amount of food (4:42-44); he heals the Syrian army commander of leprosy (5:1-19); he strikes his servant Gehazi with leprosy (5:20-27); he makes an ax head float (6:1-7); he blinds the entire Syrian army and takes them captive (6:8-23). Note that these works were done in a variety of places, settings and circumstances. Israel had no excuse for its idolatry when such vivid demonstrations of God's power were exhibited before their eyes.

8. Comment on 2 Kgs 4:27 in relation to a prophet's knowledge.

9. What lesson did Naaman learn that Jehoram did not (2 Kgs 5:7-8, 15, 17)?

10. Why was Elisha unafraid of the Syrians (2 Kgs 6:16)? What does his servant see?

Day 4: The Syrian Siege

The Syrians show an incredible resiliency – or stubbornness – as they continue to attack Israel after numerous defeats. But Israel is resilient, too, for the people continue in rebellion and unbelief after these numerous victories. In this latest episode, the Syrians besiege Samaria to the point of disgusting desperation (2 Kgs 6:24-31). When all appears hopeless, Elisha delivers an amazing prophecy: overnight, the situation would be radically reversed and there would be an abundance of food (2 Kgs 7:1-2). God puts the Syrians to flight without even the knowledge of Israel much less their help (2 Kgs 7:3-11). The abandoned camp of the Syrians is found by four lepers who then inform the rest of Samaria. Once again, God's expression of benevolent care falls on deaf ears.

11. Like his father Ahab, Jehoram looks upon God's prophet as his _____.

12. How were the lepers affected by their conscience?

13. What happened to the official who doubted Elisha's prophecy (2 Kgs 7:17-20)?

Day 5: The Death of Ben-Hadad

In the course of time, Elijah's anointing of Hazael as king over Syria comes to pass (2 Kgs 8:7-15). Elisha is sent to Damascus and tells of Ben-Hadad's impending death, albeit not by the illness with which he is currently afflicted. As Elisha delivers his prophecy to Hazael, he is filled with sadness in contemplation of Hazael's future cruelty to Israel. I believe there is a parallel between Elisha's feelings toward Syria and Jonah's feelings toward Nineveh which later cause him to flee from his prophetic responsibility. Elisha, however, fulfills his commission and Hazael murders Ben-Hadad for his throne.

14. In what measure of esteem was Elisha held by the heathen Syrian king?

15. What suggests that Hazael was less than sincere in his words to Elisha in 2 Kgs 8:13?

Day 1: A Royal Review

About this time in the study of the divided kingdom the names and dates of the kings begin to run together. It would be helpful to make your own chart of kings. Here are the names, approximate dates and a brief note on the kings studied thus far (all dates B.C.):

Kings of Israel:

Jeroboam (931-910): Started own priesthood, calf-worship; all descendants destroyed.

Nadab (910-909): Son of Jeroboam; killed by Baasha.

Baasha (909-886): Killed Jeroboam's descendants; his house to be destroyed as well.

Elah (886-885): Son of Baasha; killed by servant Zimri while drunk.

Zimri (885): Reigned 7 days; killed Baasha's descendants; suicide in burning palace.

Omri (885-874): Commander of army; founded Samaria as capital city.

Ahab (874-853): Son of Omri; married Jezebel; introduced idolatry on wide scale.

Ahaziah (853-852): Son of Ahab; died from fall.

Jehoram (852-841): Brother of Ahaziah; did not worship Baal; killed by Jehu.

Kings of Judah:

Rehoboam (931-913): Fortified Judah; plundered by Egyptians for rebellion to God.

Abijam (or Abijah) (913-911): Son of Rehoboam; defeated Israel in great battle.

Asa (911-870): Son of Abijam; religious reformer; rebelled against God in later life.

Jehoshaphat (873-848): Son of Asa; taught Judah; judicial reform; allied with Israel.

Day 2: Jehoram Reigns in Judah

Remember, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, reigns in Judah concurrently with Jehoram, son of Ahab, in Israel. But Jehoram of Judah is also the son-in-law of Ahab, for he married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chr 21:1-7). After assuming the throne, Jehoram assassinates all of his brothers. Because of his wickedness, God stirred up the enemies of Judah in rebellion, including Edom, Libnah, the Philistines, and the Arabians (2 Chr 21:8-17). Jehoram finally succumbs to a gruesome disease (2 Chr 21:18-20).

1. Why did God spare the descendants of Jehoram?
2. What was taken from Jehoram by the Arabians?
3. How did the people react when Jehoram died?

Day 3: The Brief Reign of Ahaziah

Judah only had one choice for king, for all of Jehoram's children had been killed by the Arabians except Ahaziah (aka Jehoahaz or Azariah), son of Athaliah (2 Chr 22:1-6).

Through Athaliah, the corrupting influence of Jezebel reaches into Judah. Ahaziah allies himself with his brother-in-law and king of Israel, Jehoram (aka Joram), and battles the Syrians. When Ahaziah goes to visit the wounded Jehoram at Jezreel, the stage is set for the judgment of God to fall upon him. We will explore this more fully in the next lesson.

4. Whose influence was strong in turning Ahaziah to wickedness?

Day 4: Athaliah Usurps the Throne

After the death of her son, and in consequence of the decimation of the royal family both by the Arabian invasion and the slaughter of Jehu, Athaliah is able to wrest control of the throne for herself (2 Chr 22:10-12). She had been the de facto ruler when both her husband and son reigned, as her mother Jezebel had been during the reign of Ahab. Athaliah is unaware that a royal seed has yet been preserved according to the covenant of David.

5. Who did Athaliah murder to secure the throne?

6. Who was hidden by whom in order to keep the royal lineage intact?

7. How long did Athaliah rule?

Day 5: The Anointing of Jehu

This is the last piece of the puzzle from God's commission to Elijah at Mt. Horeb (1 Kgs 19:16-17). Jehu is now anointed as the next king of Israel, and as such he shall serve as God's instrument of judgment against the wickedness of both Israel and Judah (2 Kgs 9:1-13).

8. Who sends the prophet to anoint Jehu?

9. T/F The anointing was in private.

10. In Jehu, whom was Jehovah avenging?

11. What was the perception of the anointing prophet by Jehu's associates?

Day 1: The Slaying of the Kings of Israel and Judah

When Ahab showed some respect for God by his repentance, God delayed His vengeance against Ahab's house for several years (1 Kgs 21:29). But neither of his sons, Ahaziah or Jehoram, were humbled by the words and deeds of Elisha or the other prophets. Further, Ahab's son-in-law, Jehoram, and his grandson, Ahaziah, had led Judah down the path of Baal worship at the instigation of Athaliah, Ahab's daughter. The time had come, therefore, for a purge of Ahab's influence, and Jehu is the man for the job. The newly anointed king immediately obeys the charge of the prophet and seeks Jehoram who was convalescing in Jezreel from battle wounds sustained against the Syrians (2 Kgs 9:14-20). In the confrontation, both Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah are killed (2 Kgs 9:21-24, 27-29). Note that both Jehu and his aide Bidkar had been with Ahab when he took possession of Naboth's vineyard and had heard Elijah's prophecy against him (2 Kgs 9:25-26; 1 Kgs 21:17-24).

1. Who was still influencing Baal-worship in Israel?
2. Who was slain besides Naboth?
3. Where did Jehu cast the body of Jehoram?

Day 2: Jezebel's Judgment

While popular sentiment still favored Jezebel and her Baal worship, her support was not unanimous. Several eunuchs turn on the wicked queen-mother and toss her from the wall window whereupon Jehu finishes her off under the hooves of his horses (2 Kgs 9:30-37). Unaffected by his gruesome act, Jehu enters the city to eat. But then with second thoughts, Jehu sends a burial detail to dispose of the corpse only to find that the dogs have left little of Jezebel to bury. So ends this vile woman's 30-plus years of heathen influence in Israel.

4. Research: What was Jezebel suggesting by her reference to Jehu as "Zimri"?
5. Upon what basis did Jehu later wish to bury Jezebel?
6. Was Jehu aware that he was fulfilling God's prophecies?

Day 3: Ahab's Sons Killed

The following acts of Jehu give us some insight into royal dynasties and the effort of kings to ensure their throne to their posterity. Ahab had an extensive power base remaining in his many sons and grandsons and a network of counselors and handlers who

were over them (2 Kgs 10:1-5). Jehu challenges them to proclaim one of Ahab's heirs king and prepare to establish his throne by warfare. Thus having been frightened by his threat, the elders of Samaria capitulate and execute the 70 sons of Ahab (2 Kgs 10:6-11).

7. Why didn't the devotees of Ahab fight against Jehu?
8. To whom does Jehu attribute the execution of Ahab's sons?
9. Who was killed in Jezreel in addition to the sons of Ahab in Samaria?

Day 4: Further Extermination of Ahab's Family

On his way to Samaria, Jehu happens upon some men of Ahaziah's family who are going to visit Jehoram and Jezebel (2 Kgs 10:12-14). They are obviously unaware of the genocide that is underway and fall prey to Jehu. Continuing his journey to Samaria, Jehu proceeds to exterminate the remainder of Ahab's relatives (2 Kgs 10:15-17).

10. What suggests that Jehonadab is a man of some stature and influence?
11. What did Jehu say he would show to Jehonadab?

Day 5: Baal-Worshippers Killed

Jehu next concocts a scheme whereby all the devotees of Baal are persuaded to assemble in Samaria ostensibly for a great feast to the idol (2 Kgs 10:18-28). After carefully identifying the Baalites, Jehu murders the whole assembly and then tears down the temple of the idol. While Jehu was zealous in cleansing the land of Baal's influence, it appears that his motives were more political than religious (2 Kgs 10:29-31). He had no intention of restoring pure Jehovah worship. One other important footnote from the reign of Jehu: *"In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel ..."* (2 Kgs 10:32-33). This "downsizing" will continue for another 100 years until Israel is finally and completely destroyed.

12. How was Jehu careful to identify the adherents of Baal?
13. Who assisted Jehu in this scheme?
14. What was the site of Baal's temple in the time of the writer of 2 Kings?
15. T/F In spite of Jehu's hand in fulfilling God's prophecies, Jehu never fully honored God in his heart.
16. What blessing was given to Jehu for his zeal against Ahab?
17. What areas of Israel were lost to their enemies during this time?

Day 1: Joash Supplants Athaliah

The current reform which now sweeps across Judah is due to the courage and godly influence of the priest Jehoiada. Jehoiada organizes a coup against the wicked queen Athaliah by proclaiming young Joash, rightful heir to the throne, king (2 Chr 23:1-11). Athaliah's vileness has apparently alienated most of her supporters, for Jehoiada executes her without opposition and the land rejoices (2 Chr 23:12-15, 21). Jehoiada then commences the process of reform which Joash will continue (2 Chr 23:16-19).

1. What was Jehoiada's purpose in making Joash king (2 Chr 23:3)?
2. Who was Mattan and what happened to him?
3. How old is Joash when he becomes king (2 Chr 24:1)?

Day 2: The Reforms of Joash

Both the physical structure of the temple and its worship activities had fallen into ruin under Athaliah's influence (2 Chr 24:1-7). Joash thus makes provisions to finance a restoration project (2 Chr 24:8-14). After the Levites delay in affecting repairs, Joash installs a special box for renovation funds. Enough is collected for structural repairs as well as interior articles.

4. How was Joash influenced by Jehoiada (2 Chr 24:2, 14)?
5. T/F Joash introduced a new law when he collected the funds for temple repairs.
6. How much did the people contribute when faced with a direct, specific need?

Day 3: The Apostasy and Death of Joash

When Jehoiada died, Joash lost the strong godly influence which had kept him on the proper course (2 Chr 24:15-22). The same old process repeats itself: Judah falls into idolatry; God sends prophets to convict them of their sin; the people refuse to listen; and God punishes them. Joash even goes so far as to stone the prophet Zechariah, Jehoiada's son. When the Syrian king Hazael threatens Jerusalem, Joash pays tribute to him from the treasuries of the temple and the royal house (2 Kgs 12:17-18). During a later incursion, the Syrians kill the leaders of Judah and wound Joash (2 Chr 24:23-25) who is then dispatched by his own servants. Joash thus demonstrates that a good man can become wicked in spite of all the good and positive influences which bear upon him.

7. What tribute is paid to Jehoiada's life?

8. T/F The Syrians defeated the army of Judah by the sheer force of numbers.
9. What is the stated reason for the assassination of Joash by his servants?

Day 4: Amaziah's War with Edom

Amaziah had some redeeming values yet he was *"not like his father David"* (2 Kgs 14:3). Upon establishing his throne, Amaziah executed those aides who had killed his father, but his vengeance was not unrestrained (2 Chr 25:3-4). After suppressing the Edomite revolt which began during the reign of Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:20), Amaziah set up the gods of Edom and began to worship them (2 Chr 25:14-16). This occurs just after Amaziah had heeded the words of God's prophet and sent back the Israelite mercenaries he had hired (2 Chr 25:6-10). Thus we have a puzzling dichotomy that existed at different times among the Israelites: a desire to worship God but a corresponding desire to worship the idols of the nations around. A prophet condemns Amaziah's irrational behavior: *"Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?"* (2 Chr 25:15).

10. How did Amaziah restrain himself in his execution of his father's killers?
11. What did the Edomites set up for themselves during Jehoram's reign?
12. What lesson do we learn about money and doing what is right in 2 Chr 25:9?
13. How does Amaziah respond to the prophet who rebukes him for worshipping idols?

Day 5: Amaziah's War with Israel

At Amaziah's instigation, Judah goes to war with Israel only to be soundly defeated (2 Chr 25:17-24). Having been captured and then released, Amaziah suffered the same fate as his father, assassination by his own people (2 Chr 25:25-28). Judah has now been plagued with wicked kings for the past eighty years. Israel has excelled Judah in idolatry and rebellion to God, but Judah is following the same course that will eventually lead to the destruction and exile of both kingdoms.

14. Who was "the thistle that was in Lebanon"?
15. What did the king of Israel do in Jerusalem?
16. What did he take back with him to Israel?

Day 1: The Reign of Jehoahaz

Jehoahaz reigns over Israel for seventeen years following the death of his father, Jehu, and he does not rise above the wickedness of his predecessors (2 Kgs 13:1-9). Consequently, God allows Syria to prevail over Israel and make the army *“like the dust at threshing.”* God, however, is moved with compassion at Jehoahaz’ plea for help, and He relieves Israel from Syrian oppression. Nevertheless, Israel fails to turn to God in gratitude but continues to follow the corrupt practices begun by Jeroboam 130 years earlier.

1. Why do you think some people ask for God’s help and then, when they receive it, turn away from Him?
2. To what was the army of Jehoahaz reduced?

Day 2: The Reign of Jehoash

The sixteen years of Jehoash’s reign are briefly summarized in 2 Kgs 13:10-13. The “might” of Jehoash is mentioned in regard to his defeat of Amaziah of Judah (2 Chr 25:17-24). Apparently, the Israelite military had recovered from the battering it had taken at the hands of the Syrians. Note also that this victory of Jehoash was by the hand of God (2 Chr 25:20).

3. Jehoash was the grandson of what king?

Day 3: The Death of Elisha

Elisha’s lengthy prophetic work has finally come to its conclusion. Jehoash demonstrates a strange tendency among unfaithful men: many participate in evil while recognizing and even admiring those who are godly (2 Kgs 13:14). Elisha’s last act involves both a blessing and a reprimand. Jehoash is assured of victory over the Syrians (2 Kgs 13:15-17), but he is also told that Syria will not be completely destroyed (2 Kgs 13:18-19).

4. T/F The chariots of Israel took Elisha to heaven even as they did Elijah.
5. T/F Elisha was angry because Jehoash shot his arrow out of the west window.
6. What happened to the man buried in Elisha’s tomb?

Day 4: God’s Patience Extended

As prophesied by Elisha, Jehoash successfully wages war against Syria (2 Kgs 13:22-25). Note especially God’s continuing attitude toward rebellious and spiritually declining

Israel: “*But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them ... and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence.*” We should be impressed with how longsuffering God was with those who had little concern or respect for Him as He sought to provide redemption from sin.

7. T/F Jehoash recovered from Hazael the land taken from his father Jehoahaz.
8. What encouraged God’s mercy and longsuffering toward Israel?
9. How many times did Jehoash defeat Ben-Hadad? Why only three times?

Day 5: Jeroboam II

Jeroboam’s “*long reign of forty-one years was truly an Indian summer*” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 997). During this period Israel enjoyed territorial expansion, material wealth and relative peace from enemies, but these blessings were misinterpreted by the people as God’s approval. The prophets Amos and Hosea confront a society riddled with profligacy, immorality and vain worship, but their dire warnings are drowned out by the peace and prosperity of the time. These prophets and their reflection of Israelite society will be studied in the next quarter.

The history of Jeroboam II is found in 2 Kgs 14:23-29. Again, God has compassion upon Israel even though its suffering is self-inflicted. God’s patience has not yet fully run its course, and He saves them and blesses them again through Jeroboam II. Yet for all the punishment and privilege, God’s overtures are rejected and Israel continues down the road to oblivion. Jeroboam II’s reign ends in 753 BC, a mere thirty years before Assyria will destroy Samaria.

A new era of prophecy will begin during Jeroboam’s reign. More emphasis will be given to the future coming of the Messiah, and the prophets will commit their prophecies to writing. Till now, most prophecies were delivered orally and only occasionally recorded. From now on, several books bearing the name of the prophet will appear, and some of the prophecies will be very detailed. Also, as a general rule, miracles will decline as more emphasis will be placed upon visions and predictions concerning the distant future. Israel’s hope does not lie in the present or the near future for these hold only the wrath of God’s punitive judgment. Israel and Judah are directed to peer down a distant path to spiritual redemption rather than vainly hope for political prominence and military might. Those days have faded away, never to return, and victory and dominion will now only belong to Abraham’s descendants as they are willing to embrace God’s Messiah.

10. What prophet assured Israel of the recovery of territory?
11. What two prophetic books tell us more about Israel under Jeroboam II’s reign?
12. How does prophecy begin to change at this time?

Day 1: The Vision of Obadiah Against Edom

It is impossible to determine the exact date of Obadiah. The vision has to do with God's coming judgment upon the Edomite nation. The Edomites were descendants of Esau and their territory lay along the Jordan rift between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah, a region called the Arabah. The valley steeply rose to mountains on both sides providing a contour that was at once difficult to attack and easy to defend. The Edomites were hostile toward Israel as demonstrated by their earlier refusal to allow passage as the people were migrating from Sinai to Canaan (Num 20:14-21). More recently, Edom had revolted against King Jehoram of Judah and set up its own king (2 Kgs 8:20-22). In Obadiah 1-9, the pride of Edom is rebuked and God assures this smug, confident nation that it would indeed fall at His command.

1. What did the pride of Edom make them say in their hearts?
2. What will contribute to Edom's downfall (v 7)?

Day 2: Edom's Downfall and Future Salvation

Edom had gloated over Jerusalem's attack and defeat (Ob 10-16), possibly the occasion referred to in 2 Chr 21:16-18. Though the punishment of Jerusalem was divinely instigated, this was no justification for Edom's rejoicing. In a prophecy with Messianic implications, Obadiah says that deliverance will eventually come to Mount Zion and Esau (Edom) would be judged and destroyed (Ob 17-21). Comparing the parallel idea in Amos 9:11-12 with its fulfillment and application in Acts 15:15-18, the picture is clearly Messianic. The Edomites, with the other Gentile peoples, would find their deliverance and salvation by uniting with Israel and Judah under Christ.

3. What should Edom not have done when Jerusalem was in distress?
4. What would be the standard of Edom's judgment (Ob 15)?

Day 3: Joel's Locusts of Judgment

Like Obadiah, the date of Joel is uncertain. The prophecy begins with the description of a locust invasion which decimates the land (Joel 1:1-2:11). The fields are laid waste and an accompanying drought invites fires to consume what little the locusts have left. In this a warning is given: *"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty"* (Joel 1:15; see also 2:1-2, 11). This calamity should humble the people and drive them to God for help (Joel 1:13-14).

5. What did the land look like before the locusts invaded? And afterward?

6. Why were the priests lamenting? Why were the drunkards wailing?
7. Who has brought the locusts upon the land?

Day 4: Repentance and Restoration

The locusts were designed to encourage repentance and a return to God (Joel 2:12-17). God has looked down both upon Israel and the Gentile nations and found them wanting; therefore, severe judgments are coming and only those who repent and turn to God will be spared. God has not yet given up on Israel; He vows to bless the land according to His promises if they will return to Him (Joel 2:18-27).

Using the locust invasion as a backdrop, Joel then turns his attention to the Messianic future (Joel 2:28-32). His main piece of the Messianic puzzle concerns the role and work of the Holy Spirit. Another “*great and terrible day of the LORD*” looms ahead, this one in connection with the Messiah’s kingdom. In that day, the Holy Spirit will give widespread revelation through men and women, young and old, and even servants. Through their message the Lord will call all nations to salvation, and whoever embraces the Lord shall be saved. Those who reject the safe haven offered by the Spirit will be subject to the wrath of God. This prophecy lies dormant for hundreds of years until Peter applies it to events commencing on Pentecost (Ac 2:16ff). The apostles’ baptism with the Spirit on that day and additional works of the Spirit through the agency of apostles and prophets constituted salvation to the believing remnant and judgment upon the unbelieving majority. Thus, Joel’s prophecy cannot be rightly understood apart from the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah and the timeless gospel message emanating from the Holy Spirit during the first century.

8. What response is God looking for in the heart of the penitent sinner?
9. T/F Joel’s prophecy applied **only** to the events on Pentecost and nothing else.
10. Where is deliverance to be found (compare Ob 17)? Where is this (Heb 12:22)?

Day 5: Mt. Zion and the Valley of Jehoshaphat

The language of judgment continues throughout Joel 3: “*bring back the captives*”; “*I will sit to judge*”; “*the day of the LORD*”; “*the sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness*”; “*the LORD also will roar from Zion*”; “*the heavens and earth will shake*”; “*so you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain*” (vv. 1, 12, 14-17). The Valley of Jehoshaphat (“Jehovah judges,” see vv. 2, 12, 14) is a figurative place of God’s judgment of the nations for their ungodliness; Mt. Zion is the figurative place of protection and fellowship with God for the faithful (see the description in vv. 18-21).

11. When are these judgments to occur (see Joel 3:1)?

Day 1: Historical Background

By the time of Jonah's prophecy in the reign of Jeroboam II, Assyria had already threatened Israel's welfare. The first reference to Israel in the Assyrian annals, during the reign of Shalmaneser (859-824 B.C.), concerns King Ahab's alliance with other sea-coast kings against the invading Assyrian army (*ISBE*, Vol. 1, p. 334). Later, the Assyrians decimated portions of Syria and marched southward as far as Mt. Carmel. On this occasion King Jehu paid tribute to Shalmaneser (as depicted on the Black Obelisk). Assyrian history also notes tribute being paid by King Joash (or Jehoash) of Israel sometime around 800 B.C. during the reign of Adadnirari III (810-783 B.C.) (ibid, p. 335). From Adadnirari's death to the commencement of Tiglath-pileser III's reign in 745 B.C., the nation of Assyria was disorganized and plagued with revolt and warfare. It was during this lull in Assyrian power that Israel flourished under Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) and that the prophet Jonah was sent to Nineveh, the great capital city of Assyria.

1. T/F Assyrian history notes that Ahab paid tribute to Assyria.
2. What was the general state of Assyria when Jonah went to Nineveh?

Day 2: Jonah: The Fleeing Prophet

It is almost inconceivable that someone as intimately acquainted with Jehovah as a prophet would attempt to escape his God-given responsibility. Further, Jonah's actions run counter to the typical Jew's attachment to his ancestral land. Nevertheless, Jonah finds God's command to preach to the heathen Assyrians so odious that he books passage to Tarshish, in modern-day Spain, to avoid the task (Jon 1:1-17).

3. To whom did the sailors cry when the storm first pounded the ship? To whom did the sailors make vows and sacrifice after the storm?
4. How does Jonah identify God?
5. What would Jonah rather do than repent (Jon 1:12)?

Day 3: Jonah: The Penitent Prophet

The Lord preserved Jonah in the belly of the fish giving him opportunity to reflect upon the pointlessness of defying God (Jon 2:1-10). In the storm God demonstrated to Jonah His power and wrath; in the fish He demonstrated His care and provision even for those who willfully resist Him. Moved by his utterly helpless condition and the futility of resisting the will of God, Jonah repents of his sin and calls out to God for salvation.

6. Describe what Jonah has learned about God-given responsibility (see esp. Jon 2:9).

Day 4: Jonah: The Obedient Prophet

Jonah is recommissioned by God to preach to the great city of Nineveh; this time, Jonah obeys without hesitation (Jon 3:1-4). The message is terse and threatens destruction in the near future. Incredibly, the Ninevites believe the message of the prophet and repent (Jon 3:5-10). What could have caused such a ready response in the hearts of these wicked and cruel heathens? One possibility is expressed by Homer Hailey:

“Jesus has helped us at this point when He said, ‘For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation’ (Luke 11:30). Jesus’ resurrection from the dead would be the sign to His generation, and to all generations since. So Jonah was a sign to the people of Nineveh. This indicates that the report of the experience of Jonah at sea, being swallowed by the fish and released on dry land, had preceded him to the great city” (*A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 76).

In any case, God shows His genuine concern for all men. Both the individual (Jonah) and the multitudes (the Ninevites) are of concern to Him, and salvation has been offered to Jew and Gentile on the basis of repentance. God was especially the God of the Jews but not *exclusively* so; He seeks fellowship with all who will turn from their iniquities.

7. Locate Nineveh on a map and estimate its distance from Israel.

8. T/F God told the Ninevites He would spare them if they would repent.

Day 5: Jonah: The Angry Prophet

When God spares Nineveh, Jonah is angry (Jon 4:1-4). Perhaps he, like Elisha, could foresee the suffering they would one day inflict upon his people (comp. 2 Kgs 8:11-12), and he wanted them destroyed for that reason. God confronts him with a question all should consider: “*Is it right for you to be angry?*” Anger is never justified when it arises from opposition to God’s character. The truth is that Jonah is mad because God is God. God therefore stages an object lesson in compassion (Jon 4:5-11). Jonah’s attitude demonstrates the gulf that exists between God and man: Jonah had more feelings of pity and compassion for a plant than he did for an entire city of human beings because the plant brought him personal benefit. God, however, is intimately concerned with all men and does not delight in the destruction of any (Ezek 18:32). Jonah’s narrow nationalism is not the outlook God intended for the Jews; Jonah should have been more concerned about the *underlying reason* for Nineveh’s eventual punishment of Israel.

9. What did Jonah know about God? How did he know this?

10. Discuss how petty personal concerns can eclipse other more important issues.