

June 18-24

Week 25

The reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel are all evaluated according to the posture of each toward the Lord God.

This week, as we continue Act 2, scene 6, we encounter three of the most striking characters in this period of Israel's history:

1. Ahab, who married wicked Jezebel, serves as the epitome of an evil king over Israel.
 2. Ahab's nemesis, Elijah, served the Lord so impressively that he became the epitome of a true prophet of the Lord and performed some of the greatest miracles in the Old Testament.
 3. Jehoshaphat, a king of Judah, although flawed, carried out extensive reforms and led his people to worship the Lord for a time during his reign.
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Day 1**Read 1 Kings 15:1-24; 2 Chronicles 13-16****Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 4**

Two kings of Judah are covered today.

King Abijah (or Abijam), the son of Rehoboam, reigned for three years. His reign was characterized by not following the Lord, although 2 Chronicles 13 tells of Abijah's one success in battle "because [the Judahites] depended on the Lord" (v. 18).

His son Asa, who followed him as king, was a good king who sought the Lord. Yet Asa's treaty with Aram was a failure because it violated the covenant with God and relied on a human solution to the problem with Israel.

Notice the language of wholehearted devotion to the Lord in these stories and think deeply about 2 Chronicles 16:9: "The eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him."

Evaluate your heart today. Is your heart completely committed to the Lord?

Day 2

Read 1 Kings 15:25-16:34; 2 Chronicles 17

Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 5

Read today about the succession of several generations of Israelite kings, all of whom were evil, ignoring the ways of God. Notice that evil escalated in succeeding generations. The Israelite kings stand in contrast to good king Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17, who emulated his ancestor David and rejoiced in the ways of the Lord.

Also notice in 1 Kings 16:23-24 the origin of the city of Samaria. The area surrounding this city in the center of the land would be an important geographical area in the time of Jesus (the province of Samaria, where the Samaritans lived).

Today emulate King Jehoshaphat, rejoicing in the ways of the Lord. Extol God's goodness in prayer.

Day 3

Read 1 Kings 17-19

Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 6

Certainly one of the most dramatic sections in the narrative of 1 Kings concerns the prophetic ministry of Elijah. As you read, ask, “How is God the true hero of these stories?”

Here we read the stories of Elijah’s performing miracles at the home of the widow of Zarephath, the showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and God’s meeting Elijah on Mount Horeb.

Wicked King Ahab had introduced Baal worship into Israel (see 1Kg 16:31-32). Baal was a pagan fertility god of the crops and rain, and these stories show that God is the one true God, who has power over all things.

Enjoy these stories and write down what you learn about God from them. Also remember that John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk 1:17), as the forerunner of Jesus, the Messiah.

How was John the Baptist like Elijah?

Day 4

Read 1 Kings 20-21

Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 7

The story of Ahab gets worse. In 1 Kings 20 notice how the tables were turned on Ben-hadad of Aram. The chapter begins with the king of Aram's clearly having the upper hand and ends with his humiliation. Yet the story is really about Ahab's wickedness. In spite of God's working on behalf of Israel, Ahab paid no attention to the ways of the Lord. God had devoted Ben-hadad to destruction, but Ahab made a treaty with him.

In 1 Kings 21, Ahab's immaturity and wickedness came to a head, spurred on by his evil wife, Jezebel. To satisfy his own desires, Ahab murdered Naboth and stole his vineyard.

As you read, watch for several violations of the covenant and law God had given his people as they came into the land. Ahab's sin was manifested in a lack of attention to God's ways.

In what areas of life do you need to give more attention to the ways of God?

Day 5**Read 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18-20****Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 8**

First Kings ends with an alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab and its aftermath. These two kings provide a contrast, Ahab serving as the epitome of Israel's bad kings and Jehoshaphat a king of Judah who, for the most part, sought the Lord. As you read the story, notice that Ahab dealt with life strictly from the perspective of human power, failing to take the true prophet's words as from the Lord. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, sought the Lord.

Notice how God's acts brought about judgment on Ahab, and Ahab's evil son took his place. Because of his alliance with Israel's King Ahab, however, the prophet of the Lord rebuked Jehoshaphat. In response, Jehoshaphat repented and brought about extensive reforms in the land, including setting up a network of sound leadership. Notice that the emphasis in the story is the complete focus and dependence on the Lord during this period.

Praise God that he judges evil in the world, bringing wicked rulers to account.

In prayer express your complete dependence on the Lord today.

Day 6

Read 2 Kings 1-4

Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 9

Second Kings continues the story of the divided kingdom and the powerful prophets of the ninth century BC.

In today's reading Elijah finished his ministry, and Elisha succeeded him. Elijah foreshadowed the ministry of John the Baptist (see 2Kg 1:8; Mt 3:4). Elisha's ministry, however, not only continued the miracles of Elijah (watch for miracles done by Elijah that are repeated by Elisha) but also foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus. In our reading today, Elisha raised a child from the dead and multiplied bread. The Elijah and Elisha stories are some of the most powerful in Scripture, as God graciously poured out miraculous works.

Praise God that he chooses to manifest his power in the world through miracles.

Day 7

Reading Summary for Week 25

Rulers of the northern kingdom (Israel) all rejected worship of the Lord. The worst was Ahab. His infamous wife Jezebel promoted worship of Baal as a popular alternative. God raised the fiery prophet Elijah to confront such brazen idolatry and bring the nation back to himself.

In the southern kingdom (Judah), Solomon's descendants reigned. Some were disloyal to the Lord, but some were loyal, especially Asa, who led a revival of true worship (2 Chronicles 15).

Prayer/Meditation

God of Elijah, I worship you. Your power is far beyond any of the so-called gods. Thank you for demonstrating your power against wickedness in an evil day. Give me the courage to stand for you, just as Elijah did, even when I am in a minority. And thank you for good leaders such as Asa, who were your instruments for helping a nation return to you. Please again raise up such godly leadership that the world will know the one true God. Amen.
