

Divided Kingdom, Decline; Elijah and Ahab

1 Kings 12:1 through 22:53

Introduction:

As we move into the second half of 1 Kings, and as we move past Solomon, we see the Kingdom of Israel divided. Where life under Solomon was near idyllic for most of Solomons' reign, his downfall brought the predicted division and decline of Israel. Solomon's son Rehoboam foolishly refused to lighten the tax burden that Solomon had imposed on the people. And as a result, the 10 northern tribes revolted, and this set up Jeroboam as their king. This resulted in the northern kingdom (or Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah) fracturing from each other and beginning a long and drawn-out division and decline that carried through 2 Kings as well.

The remainder of 1 Kings and 2 Kings present the unfolding of the decline of Judah and Israel. We can see Judah retains some level of stability for a longer period of time than does Israel, which begins to crumble very quickly under the hand of Jeroboam.

The kingdom fractures in 931/ 930 BC as the following charts, adapted from the ESV Study Bible show:

The Divided Kingdom: Kings of Judah (all dates B.C.)

King	Years of Reign	Total Years	Accession Year*	Possible Co-Reigns	References in 1-2 Kings**
Rehoboam	931/930-915/914	17			1 Kings 12:1-24; 14:21-31
Abijah/Abijam	915/914-912/911	3	18 of Jeroboam I		1 Kings 15:1-8
Asa	912/911-871/870	41	20 of Jeroboam I		1 Kings 15:9-24
Jehoshaphat	871/870-849/848	25	4 of Ahab	with Asa from 873	1 Kings 22:41-50

The Divided Kingdom: Kings of Israel (all dates B.C.)

King	Years of Reign	Total Years	Accession Year*	Possible Co-Reigns	References in 1-2 Kings**
Jeroboam I	931/930-911/910	21 (22)			1 Kings 11:26-40; 12:1-14:20
Nadab	911/910-910/909	1 (2)	2 of Asa		1 Kings 15:25-32
Baasha	910/909-887/886	23 (24)	3 of Asa		1 Kings 15:27-16:7
Elah	887/886-886/885	1 (2)	26 of Asa		1 Kings 16:8-14
Zimri	886/885	7 days	26 of Asa		1 Kings 16:9-20
Omri	886/885-875/874	11 (12)	31 of Asa	Tibni reigns after Zimri for 5 years as rival to Omri	1 Kings 16:16-17, 21-28
Ahab	875/874-853	21 (22)	38 of Asa		1 Kings 16:29-17:1; 18:1-19:3; 20:1-22:40
Ahaziah	853-852	1 (2)	17 of Jehoshaphat		1 Kings 22:51-53; 2 Kings 1:1-18

Below is the outline we started with in the first half of 1 Kings.

1. Solomon's Rise and Reign (chapters 1-11)
 - A. Solomon and the Kingdom's Blessings (chapters 1-10)
 - B. Solomon's Sin (chapter 11)
1. The Kingdom's Division (chapters 12-14)
2. The Northern Kingdom's Decline (chapters 15-16)
3. Elijah and Ahab (chapters 17-22)

2. The Kingdom's Division (chapters 12 through 14)

Chapter 12 begins with Rehoboam, Solomon's son, having taken the throne of Israel at the end of chapter 11:

And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place. (1 Kings 11:43)

Rehoboam's Foolish Reign (1 Kings 12:1-15)

The Kingdom has not yet divided but after Solomon's fall, God raising up adversaries, including Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who had fled to Egypt, and Solomon's death, the division is on the horizon.

Rehoboam has a coronation at Shechem, Jeroboam returns to offer his service.

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. (1Kings 12:1-2)

We aren't explicitly informed why Rehoboam went to Shechem, which is north of Jerusalem, although Shechem was a place of covenant renewal earlier in the history of Israel. In Joshua 24:1-27, for example, once Israel entered the land, they took stock of where they had been, how far they had come, and their identity in the Lord. It is also the place where Joseph's bones were buried (Joshua 24:32). In Judges 8:22-23, and chapter 9, there was an ill-fated attempt at human kingship, when the people attempted to make Gideon king to rule over them.

In any case, we are at a pivotal point in Israel's history. This is the first and last King after Solomon who is said to rule over all Israel. What would be the theme and focus of his reign? Would he be gentle and lead in a godly way? Would he be harsh and tyrannical? He would set the tone going forward.

The people, including Jeroboam ask,

"Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you." He said to them, "Go away for three days, then come again to me." So the people went away. Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" And they said to him, "If you

will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. And he said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us’?” (1Kings 12:4-9)

Apparently, toward the end of Solomon’s reign, things had not been idyllic, but had deteriorated into a harsh rule. They were under a heavy yoke, reminiscent of their slavery in Egypt. Here was Rehoboam’s opportunity to establish his reign in a wise and godly way.

The counsel Rehoboam received from his friends was not good.

And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,’ thus shall you say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s thighs. And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’” (1Kings 12:10-11)

There is much language in these verses that speak to an undoing of God’s work in redeeming Israel out of Egypt. Jeroboam, in returning from Egypt, acts as a mediator (like Moses) between the people and Rehoboam, who is the Pharaoh figure. Sadly, like Pharaoh, we see Rehoboam’s folly in his reply to the people:

...he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. (1Kings 12:14-15)

Interestingly, amid all the human decisions in this exchange, we see God is sovereign over the affairs of men. The prophecy of Ahijah in 1 Kings 11:29-30, in which he tore his garment into twelve pieces, signifying the kingdom divided was soon to be fulfilled.

The Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12:16-24)

In verse 16, the people attempt to secede from this harsh rule:

And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel went to their tents. (1Kings 12:16)

In the following verses, Rehoboam takes various measures to attempt to restore the situation. In verse 18 he sends Adoram, who was over the forced labor to try diplomacy, and the people stoned him to death. In verses 21 through 24 he resorts to force to impose his will:

When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. (1Kings 12:21)

As we will see, there will soon be continuous war between the north and the south after this.

Jeroboam's Idolatry (931-910 BC) (1 Kings 12:25-33)

Jeroboam, who once opposed Solomon, and then tried to mediate between Jeroboam and the people and helped to free the northern tribes from Rehoboam's tyranny, now leads his people into idolatry. Back in chapter 11, Jeroboam was prophesied by Ahijah to be king over the northern tribes:

And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes (but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel)... (1Kings 11:31-32)

Jeroboam strengthened Shechem and lived there. He built and fortified cities in the north. So far, so good. But then, we see his heart – much like Solomon's – lead him astray.

And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (1Kings 12:26-28)

Obviously, this is meant to remind the reader of Aaron and the people with the golden calf. One commentator writes of this, "*Jeroboam then turns away from orthodoxy, not because it is no longer true but because it is no longer useful. He does not find it false but fearful. You see his thinking then. He must hold on to 'his' kingdom, and, since he cannot simply trust Yahweh's word for that, he must make himself secure. That is the stimulus here for false religion. If you cannot trust God, you will use religion. In Jeroboam's case, what matters is not truth but position—his position.*¹"

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*](#), Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 138.

He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings. (1Kings 12:33)

Jeroboam set up priests who were not Levites; he created his own religion, for his own purposes. Jeroboam fears man and not God, as he demonstrates an astonishing lack of faith. He attempts to create a syncretistic religion that satisfies the worshipers of Yahweh, and also the worshipers of the fertility cults – symbolized by the bulls. This is significant, as this apostasy by the northern tribes eventually leads to their exile from the land.

Jeroboam Confronted (1 Kings 13:1-10)

In these verses we have a judgment prophecy against Jeroboam. He had been promised in 1 Kings 11:38 a dynasty if he obeyed God. We see his severe disobedience, and God's severe judgment. As he stands ready to dedicate his temple in Bethel for his false religion, a man of God prophesies.

And the man cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" (1Kings 13:2)

This is fulfilled perfectly in 2 Kings 23:16 and is amazing evidence of God's providential rule in the affairs of men to accomplish His purposes.

In this episode we see Jeroboam attempting to stop the unnamed prophet, and when he stretches out his hand, it is withered, and the altar is torn. The king entreats the prophet to restore his hand. The man of God does so. At that, Jeroboam invites the prophet responds,

And the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half your house, I will not go in with you. And I will not eat bread or drink water in this place, for so was it commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water nor return by the way that you came.'" So he went another way and did not return by the way that he came to Bethel. (1Kings 13:8-10) It seems that Jeroboam is attempting to buy the man of God's loyalty, to which he wants no part of.

The Disobedient Prophet (1 Kings 13:11-34)

Another prophecy and accompanying miracle confirm God's sovereignty. An old prophet at Bethel predicts that because the prophet from Judah disobeys God by being slow to eat or drink, he will be killed by a lion.

And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD and have not kept the command that the LORD your God commanded you, but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the

place of which he said to you, “Eat no bread and drink no water,” your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.” (1Kings 13:21-22)

One commentator writes, “The point is thus forcefully made that he ought to have followed through the word of the Lord that he had received (**the command ... God gave you**, v. 21) rather than being led off his path by another’s prophetic claim (v. 18). It is further made clear that God’s law stands over everyone—that even prophets must obey it, or face judgment—and that God can use even false prophets occasionally to speak the truth.²”

The closing verses return to Jeroboam. The prophecy was an example to him that God fulfills his promises. Even prophets don’t escape the consequences of their disobedience. The prophecy, meant to lead Jeroboam to repentance, in the end led to the hardening of his heart. His attempt to secure himself by building a false temple for his false gods in Bethel and other places has failed and will lead to destruction.

After this thing Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people. Any who would, he ordained to be priests of the high places. And this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth. (1Kings 13:33-34)

Ahijah Prophecies Against Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:1-18)

One more prophecy occurs to highlight the severity and destructiveness of Jeroboam’s idolatry, which has surely affected not only himself but the people he is supposed to be leading. This is a prophecy of Jeroboam’s demise and occurs in connection with his son’s illness (verses 1-5). He has his wife disguise herself and consult Ahijah the blind prophet at Shiloh – hoping that the prophet will heal the son. Yahweh revealed to the prophet in advance of Jeroboam’s wife’s arrival,

And the LORD said to Ahijah, “Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus shall you say to her.” When she came, she pretended to be another woman. (1Kings 14:5)

Blind Ahijah proves to be a true prophet, as he recognizes the disguised queen when she arrives. And on account of Jeroboam’s grave sin, his prophecy is severe:

...therefore behold, I will bring harm upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam, as a man burns up dung until it is all gone. Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who

² Iain W. Provan, [1 & 2 Kings](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 115.

dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the LORD has spoken it.” (1Kings 14:10-11)

This again, is Deuteronomic language (Deut 28:26) In the immediate future, the Ahijah prophesies that the son will die (verses 12-13). And in the more remote future, Israel will go into exile,

...the LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin.” (1Kings 14:15-16)

Moses had previously made that prophecy (Deut 28:63-64; 29:28). The fulfillment of the immediate prophecy (14:17-18), in which the boy dies, authenticates the fulfillment of the more remote prophecy.

Jeroboam’s Death (1 Kings 14:19-20)

After the bitter prophecies against Jeroboam for his rank idolatry and other sins which affected himself, his house, and all Israel (apart from Judah), Jeroboam dies.

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. And the time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. And he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place. (1Kings 14:19-20)

Rehoboam Reigns in Judah (930-14 BC) (1 Kings 14:21-28)

After Jeroboam’s demise in Israel, the Deuteronomist returns to Rehoboam in Judah. In fact, the reader is presented with the next two kings in Judah as well. Here we find the typical evaluation of the kings based on that king’s, and thus the nation’s obedience to the level of commitment to Yahweh.

Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. (1Kings 14:21)

Interestingly we find that not only Rehoboam did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, but that Judah did,

And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. (1Kings 14:22)

The text goes on to say that under Rehoboam, Judah engaged in Canaanite rituals, such as male cult prostitution and fertility rituals. The fact that his mother was an Ammonite is mentioned twice, in verse 22, and again in verse 31. This indicates Solomon's foreign wives, who worshiped other gods, as having a lasting negative effect on Judah.

We also see that Shishak king of Egypt (v 25-26) raided the treasures of the temple, including the shields of gold that Solomon had made. Rehoboam made shields of bronze in their place (v 27). *"The golden age of Solomon is replaced by the rather grubbier **bronze** age of Rehoboam (vv. 27–28), and the peace that Solomon had known is replaced by **continual warfare** (v. 30; cf. 1 Kgs. 5:4).³"*

Rehoboam's Death (1 Kings 14:29-31)

As the author writes of Rehoboam's death, he makes sure to point out that war will now become "normal" after the peace afforded under Solomon.

And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And Abijam his son reigned in his place. (1Kings 14:30-31)

3. The Northern Kingdom's Decline (chapters 15 through 16)

Before the author returns to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he writes briefly about the next two kings of Judah. These two set the pattern for all the kings of Judah who followed. We will see that David is the measuring stick for these kings.

Abijam Reigns in Judah (914-911 BC) (1 Kings 15:1-8)

Three things to point out:

Abijam ***walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. (1Kings 15:3)***

Yahweh remained faithful to the covenant he made with David:

Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem... (1Kings 15:4)

And the author continues to point out the strife and division between Israel and Judah:

³ Iain W. Provan, [1 & 2 Kings](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 122.

Now there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. (1Kings 15:6)

Abijam then died and was buried in Jerusalem (v 8).

Asa Reigns in Judah (911-870 BC) (1 Kings 15:9-24)

Abijam's son Asa began to reign in the twentieth year of King Jeroboam and reigned for 41 years (vs 9-10).

And Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his father had done. He put away the male cult prostitutes out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. (1Kings 15:11-12)

According to verse 14, his heart was fully committed to Yahweh. He restored to the temple silver, gold and the utensils that were previously pillaged.

The author reminds us of the continued war between north and south,

And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. (1Kings 15:16)

Asa reigned for a long time in Judah and saw 5 Israelite kings rise and fall. Baasha was the second of these kings (15:33-16:7). As he wars against Baasha,

Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house and gave them into the hands of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, "Let there be a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you a present of silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." (1Kings 15:18-19)

He bribed the king of Syria to make Baasha and Israel withdraw from fighting with Judah. His reign was a faint representation of Solomon's reign, although peace was not in the picture, as in Solomon's day.

And Asa slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place. (1Kings 15:24)

The author now returns to the tragic line of kings in Israel. After getting a glimpse of the Davidic covenant being fulfilled in the previous 3 kings of Judah, here we see the prophecy of made by Ahijah in chapter 14, especially verses 10 and 11, in which the house of Jeroboam will burn begin to be fulfilled. Political stability is not found in Israel.

Nadab Reigns in Israel (910-909 BC) (1 Kings 15:25-32)

Nadab, Jeroboam's son begins to reign and continues his father's apostasy. His reign is very short.

He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin which he made Israel to sin. (1 Kings 15:26)

Baasha, who we have already seen warring with Asa, King of Judah, strikes down Nadab.

Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. (1Kings 15:27)

This ironically and decisively fulfilled the prophecy from chapter 14.

And as soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He left to the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite. (1Kings 15:29)

Baasha Reigns in Israel (909-886 BC) (1 Kings 15:33 thru 16:7)

We don't know if Baasha knew about Ahijah's prophecy, and it seems he had no understanding that God in his providence placed him on the throne, as he was more concerned with autonomy than God's glory.

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. (1Kings15:33)

His reign is predictable. He follows the ways of Jeroboam and leads Israel into sin. Furthermore, the reader sees the outworking of the decrees of God. As Yahweh used Baasha to fulfill his purposes, so he sends Jehu the prophet,

"Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens shall eat." (1Kings 16:2-4)

Interestingly, whatever else Baasha did in his twenty-four-year reign required no more ink than Nadab's two-year reign.

Elah Reigns in Israel (866-865 BC) (1 Kings 16:8-14)

Elah, Baasha's son, succeeds him. But his reign was short-lived.

In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned two years. (1Kings 16:8)

According to verse 13, all that Elah did was sin, like his father Baasha. According to verse 9, Elah was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk when Zimri, who was a commander of his chariots conspired against him and murdered him and his entire household. One commentator notes, *“The assassin is Zimri, whose butchery on this occasion is not restricted to the family of Baasha only, but extends to friends (v. 11). The devotion of the house of Issachar to worthless idols (lit. “insubstantial things”) has led it to destruction.”*⁴ This further fulfilled Jehu’s prophecy.

Zimri Reigns in Israel (865 BC – 7 days) (1 Kings 16:15-20)

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines...(1Kings 16:15)

Zimri’s reign was the most spectacularly unspectacular one yet. He reigned all of 7 days. He reigned from Tirzah, which was six miles north of Shechem. As he had carried out his coup against Elah, he did so without the support of the army. Omri was the commander of the army. The army was pro-Omri and when Zimri found out they were marching on him, he effectively committed suicide,

And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died, because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin. (1Kings 16:18-19)

Omri Reigns in Israel (885-874 BC) (1 Kings 16:21-28)

Here Omri takes control over the Northern Kingdom after a five-year power struggle with another contender for the throne – Tibni, son of Ginath.

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel, and he reigned for twelve years; six years he reigned in Tirzah. (1Kings 16:23)

Omri usurps the throne with no prophetic warrant, and this begins the worst dynasty in Israel’s history. Omri continues the trail of sin, which eventually leads to full idol worship in Israel.

Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols. (1Kings 16:25-26)

⁴ Iain W. Provan, [1 & 2 Kings](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 128–129.

Omri died, was buried in Samaria, and Ahab his son, took the throne of Israel.

Ahab Reigns in Israel (874-853 BC) (1 Kings 16:29-34)

Ahab becomes the worst king yet because he marries Jezebel and then leads Israel into Baal worship, making it the state religion, thus full apostasy from Yahweh.

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. (1Kings 16:29-30)

Ahab is the seventh king in Israel to reign all while Asa reigned in Judah in relative stability. He laughs at the sins (v 31) of those kings in Israel who went before him (who were themselves increasingly wicked).

He married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians and served Baal (v 31). He built a temple for Baal in Samaria and worshiped there. Yahweh was not even in his mind. And verse 33 says,

And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1Kings 16:33)

As we look back at these five chapters (12-16), it is easy to be struck by the increasing wickedness, especially in Israel. There is a total abandonment of Yahweh and his ways by these kings. However, another major theme is that Yahweh is in total control over history. We see this in the way prophecies are continually fulfilled. Everything is coming to pass just as God's prophets have said. David's house in Jerusalem stands firm, even as we see God's judgment on Solomon coming to pass. Furthermore, as we are about to see in chapters 17 through 22, *The most sinful of Israel's kings, Ahab, will have to reckon with the most powerful of prophetic interventions, in the shape of Elijah.*⁵ The reader of 1 Kings should not be discouraged or caught off guard by the contents of its chapters. God does and will act on his timetable. God's seeming inactivity is really his patience and longsuffering.

4. Elijah and Ahab (chapters 17 through 22)

Much of the material in chapters 13 through 16 progressed quickly, to demonstrate the increasing wickedness and sin in Israel. The author here slows down the pace of the scenes, and for the remainder of 1 Kings and into 2 Kings the focus is placed on the stark contrasts between God's prophets and Ahab and later, his son Ahaziah. The prophecies magnify Yahweh,

⁵ Iain W. Provan, [1 & 2 Kings](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 130.

vindicate the Mosaic Covenant (remember, the author is very familiar and reliant on Deuteronomy), and leave Israel condemned for their rejection of Yahweh and their immorality among each other. **Yahweh does not fail; Israel fails.**

1. Elijah and the Drought (1 Kings 17:1-24)

This is the first “act” of three in the Elijah/ Ahab narrative that progresses in three scenes.

- **Elijah Predicts the Drought (1 Kings 17:1-7)**

The first verses of the chapter provide the foundation for what comes later in chapter 18, the demonstration that Yahweh, not Baal or other gods is in control of history, life, and death.

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” (1Kings 17:1)

Elijah’s name means “my God is Yahweh” and his name bears his message. Elijah tells Ahab, essentially that Yahweh is in control, Baal is not real and has no authority. Then, Elijah listens to the word of the LORD and retreats to basically an inhospitable place, at which Yahweh provides for him, water from the brook and food which ravens brought to him (vs 2-6). In verse 7, the brook dries up, because no rain has been falling – the prophesied drought.

- **Elijah Obeys God (1 Kings 17:8-16)**

Yahweh sends Elijah to Zarephath of Sidon to meet a widow:

“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” (1Kings 17:9-10)

Much as the LORD cared for Elijah in difficult circumstances earlier, he does the same for him, as well as the widow through supernatural means. The widow is poor and has very little means for herself and her son.

And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. (1Kings 17:12-13)

One commentator writes, “He persuades the woman to take a mighty step of faith to join him. Against all parental instinct, she is to feed him first (v. 13), before her son. She does so (v. 15),

and she and her son are blessed (cf. Matt. 10:41) as she discovers that Elijah's God is alive and gives life. There was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.⁶

- **Elijah Raises the Widow's Son (1 Kings 17:17-24)**

As threat of death to Elijah has been overcome twice before – at the brook, and with the widow. In these verses we see God, through Elijah raise the widow's son from death. This is the first resurrection described in the bible. After her son becomes ill and dies, her question in verse 18 is surprising,

And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" (1Kings 17:18)

She confesses her faith in God and his judgment. Both realize that Yahweh, not Baal or some other god is in control. As God provided food for this Canaanite woman and her son, he also shows her that He is sovereign over life and death.

And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth." (1Kings 17:24)

2. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:1-46)

In this second "act" the author brings us to direct confrontation between the prophets of Baal and Elijah, prophet of Yahweh. We have already seen the supremacy and reality of the One True God, and these three scenes confirm it.

- **Elijah and Obadiah (1 Kings 18:1-19)**

Elijah, who has been living in Sidon (which wasn't far from Jezebel's hometown) for 3 years with the widow, has up to this point, remained hidden from Ahab.

After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. (1Kings 18:1-2)

Elijah meets with Obadiah who was second in command to Ahab. However, unlike Ahab, he feared God (v 3). Ahab had Obadiah meet with Elijah.

As a believer in Yahweh, his experience of the drought has been different than Elijah's. He had been searching for pastureland to feed his horses and mules to keep them alive (v 5). Jezebel had been steadily killing the prophets of Yahweh, and Obadiah had been protecting

⁶ Iain W. Provan, [1 & 2 Kings](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 133.

100 of them in a cave, and providing food for them (v 4, v 13). Elijah and Obadiah's discussion progresses, and as a result, Ahab confronts Elijah:

And Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1Kings 18:15-18)

And in verse 19 Elijah continues,

Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." (1Kings 18:19)

Ahab accuses Elijah of being the "troubler of Israel" due to the extended drought. However, Elijah says that the real problem is Ahab and Israel's lack of faithfulness to God and His covenant.

This sets up the climactic familiar second scene.

- **Yahweh or Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-40)**

With the 450 prophets of Baal and "all the people of Israel" gathered at Mt Carmel which was on the border of northern Israel and Phoenicia,

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. (1Kings 18:21)

Elijah tells them, that they cannot sit on the fence, or continue with some syncretistic blend of Yahweh and Baal worship. The people must decide to whom they owe their allegiance.

The contest is familiar. In verses 23 through 26, Elijah proposes setting up altars with sacrifices of oxen for either the Baals to consume, or Yahweh to consume. The prophets of Baal began by calling to Baal from morning to noon.

In verse 27,

And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." (1Kings 18:27)

After more crying out and cutting themselves to stir Baal, there was still no answer. Elijah, then arranged twelve stones according to the number of tribes of Israel. He arranged the sacrifice

and even had the false prophets get everything wet, to show them he wasn't cheating somehow (vs 30-35).

And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." (1Kings 18:36-37)

Elijah didn't need to dance, or yell or scream or cut himself. He simply prayed to Yahweh.

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." (1Kings 18:38-39)

Yahweh prevails over the false god of Ahab, Baal the storm god of fire and thunder. Elijah keeps covenant by mandating the death of all the false prophets (according to Deut 13:13-18; 17:2-7) to purge the land of idolatry (Deut 13:15).

- **Yahweh Sends Rain (1 Kings 18:41-46)**

The third scene confirms verse 1 in which Yahweh told Elijah to show himself to Ahab, and that "I will send rain upon the earth." Elijah sent Ahab to eat and drink after God severely defeated Baal. Elijah climbs to the top of Mt Carmel to pray (vs 41, 42). The whole episode climaxes in verse 46 with Elijah running ahead of Ahab's chariot before the rain hits.

And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. (1Kings 18:45-46)

The entire scene demonstrates what has happened all along. Although Ahab is painted to be someone to be feared, Elijah (and especially Yahweh) dominates him from their very first meeting. We see Ahab speak only once (18:17), and Elijah silences him. Ahab either does what Elijah says (18:19-20, 41-42, 45) or watches helplessly from the sidelines (18:21-40). We see that as his worldview is influenced by his so-called god, he is as impotent as the god he worships.

3. Elijah and Yahweh (1 Kings 19:1-21)

- **Elijah Flees Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-8)**

From the ESV Study Bible, "Elijah has won a mighty battle on the mountain, but a still more formidable opponent than Ahab awaits him in the form of Queen Jezebel. Victory now becomes defeat as Elijah retreats, both physically and mentally, and ultimately arrives not at Mount

Carmel but at another mountain to confront not Baal but the Lord himself, whom Elijah serves but whose ways he only partly understands and accepts.” Jezebel has been in the background, but we will soon see that she is the “power behind the throne.”

As Jezebel has earlier been said to have killed the prophets of the LORD (18:4, 13), she now threatens to kill Elijah.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” (1Kings 19:2)

Here then, Elijah seems to have a crisis of faith. In this section, instead of trusting in God, he flees for his life. In other occasions, “The Word of the LORD” directed Elijah. Here, he decides on his own. And even in his faithlessness, Yahweh is faithful. He fled to Beersheba, which was about 100 miles south of Jezreel (v 3), then fled a day’s journey into the wilderness (v 4).

In the next few verses, we see God’s provision and protection of Elijah in the wilderness for forty days that replicates Israel’s forty-year wilderness wanderings and God’s protection of them. He even went to the same mountain.

And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. (1Kings 19:8)

For the New Covenant believer, even as this points back to Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness, it points forward to the Lord Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness.

- **Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings 19:9-18)**

Finally, after more than forty days, God speaks to him.

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1Kings 19:9)

Elijah, distraught and depressed,

He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” (1Kings 19:10)

He repeats this again after Yahweh continues to question him (1 Kings 19:14). God, as if to show Elijah that He is indeed in control, gives him new instructions that will have wide ranging implications. God isn’t handcuffed by Elijah’s fear or distress. Elijah is to go anoint Hazael as king over Aram (Syria) (v 15); he is to anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat as a prophet who will take Elijah’s place (v 16).

He concludes with the following prophecy,

And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1Kings 19:17-18)

It is as if God is reminding Elijah that Elijah doesn't bear the burden alone, but that God is in control, and Elijah will now phase into a new role of preparing the way for others.

- **The Call of Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21)**

Elijah moves on to obey God and fulfill his task of appointing his successor. Elisha's name means "Yahweh is salvation." He seems to come from a prosperous background, as his work involves 12 teams of oxen to plough. According to verse 19, Elisha was working with the twelfth. Elijah cast his cloak upon him. According to the ESV Study Bible, "Elijah's apparent lack of enthusiasm for God's plan stands in sharp contrast to Elisha's reaction. He immediately leaves his normal employment to follow his new mentor, pausing only briefly to cut his ties with his old life. He kisses his parents goodbye and destroys his old means of sustenance." He gave the meat to his people.

Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. (1 Kings 19:21c)

Ahab and Syria (1 Kings 20:1-43)

After Elijah anoints Elisha, as we move to chapter 20, we might expect to read a story of Hazael being anointed as king of Syria and Jehu being anointed as king of Israel, as we read in chapter 19 verses 15-16. Instead, we find a story about Ahab going to war with Syria (Aram), and defeating them, and in which a different, unnamed prophet appears. Here, as the focus is taken off Elijah, we see then that he was indeed not the only one left and that Yahweh works in His own divine ways.

- **Ahab Wars with Syria (1 Kings 20:1-21)**

Ben-Hadad, King of Syria, along with thirty-two other kings attacked Samaria (vs 1-12). This is an attempt to make Israel a vassal kingdom of Syria and possibly to open trade routes for Syria.

And he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel and said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your best wives and children also are mine.'" (1Kings 20:2-3)

Ahab first accepts these terms in verse 4, but then in verses 5-9 reconsiders and rejects the terms,

So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Tell my lord the king, 'All that you first demanded of your servant I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'" And the messengers departed and brought him word again. (1Kings 20:9)

In verse 13, an unnamed prophet comes onto the scene,

And behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said, “Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will give it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD.” (1Kings 20:13)

In human terms, Ahab’s cause looks helpless. But The LORD, in his patience, is giving Ahab another chance to repent. Following the words of the prophet, Ahab sends his officers to lead the army and strike first (verses 13-21). Ahab defeats Ben-Hadad with a remnant army of 7000 men, accentuating all the more the supernatural victory.

- **Ahab Wars with Syria – Part 2 (1 Kings 20:22-34)**

In verse 22, we see the prophet again,

Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, “Come, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you have to do, for in the spring the king of Syria will come up against you.” (1Kings 20:22)

The servants of the king of Syria told him that they should fight against Israel not in Samaria this time, but in the plain (v 23), as the Syrians believed that the God of Israel was like their gods, limited by geography.

In the springtime, Syria, with its vast army, went to Aphek to fight against Israel (v 26).

And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because the Syrians have said, “The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys,” therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”’ And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. And the people of Israel struck down of the Syrians 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. (1Kings 20:28-29)

Again, the cause of the victory was indeed Yahweh, and his prophet said that it was a demonstration so that Ahab *and* the king of Syria would know that He was sovereign over everything, including nations.

However, all was not well, as Ben-Hadad, who should have been devoted to destruction (Lev 27:28; Deut 7:2; 29:17; Josh 6:17; 7:1; 7:20-26; 1 Sam 15:1-33), negotiated terms of his release, and Ahab formed an alliance with him and let him go (vs 33-34).

- **Judgment Prophesied upon Ahab**

Ahab continues to trust, not in God, but in the strength of man. Ahab opposed Yahweh and supported Yahweh’s enemy. Here we have a prophecy sealing Ahab’s fate. The prophet uses a parable to demonstrate: a prophet who refuses to obey and strike another prophet is himself killed by a lion (vs 35-36). The message to Ahab is clear:

And he said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.’” And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen and came to Samaria. (1Kings 20:42-43)

Naboth’s Vinyard (1 Kings 21:1-29)

The next act opens with Ahab coveting Naboth’s vineyard and offering to purchase it from him. Ahab’s palace was on the eastern side of Jezreel looking toward the Jordan down the valley. It abutted to the town wall, according to 2 Kings 9:30-31. Beyond it, in the valley was the vineyard belonging to Naboth (2 Kings 9:21).

But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” (1Kings 21:3)

Unlike the Canaanite kings (and idolatrous Ahab) who thought the land belonged to the king and his family, and is then entrusted to their subjects, Naboth understands the land to belong to Yahweh, who then gives portions of it to each Israelite family to stay in their family. Therefore, if he were to sell it, he would cut off his descendants from their rightful heritage from God (Lev 15:23; Nu 27:1-11; Num 36:1-12).

Jezebel, however, believes that might makes right, enlists the help of corrupt elders and leaders, and at least two ethics-challenged false witnesses to frame Naboth and take his land.

And Jezebel his wife said to him, “Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. And she wrote in the letters, “Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, ‘You have cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.” (1Kings 21:7-10)

After they stoned him and his sons to death (2 Kings 9:26) and buried Naboth outside the city to avoid ritual impurity (Lev 24:14; Num 5:2-4), Ahab takes possession of the land (v 16).

- **Yahweh Condemns Ahab and Ahab’s Repentance (1 Kings 21:17-29)**

Ahab’s abandonment of Yahweh for Baal leads to his total abandonment of ethics, as they are expressed in the Covenant of Moses, and his embracing of a worldview that that demands no accountability. In verse 17 we see the reinvigorated return of Elijah to condemn and prophesy against Ahab. He pronounces Yahweh’s sentence upon him that dogs will eat his and his family’s carcasses (v 19-24).

Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. Behold, I will

bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. (1Kings 21:20-21)

The idea is that Ahab and his descendants will be utterly cut off because of his great sins against Yahweh.

In verses 25 through 29, Ahab shows an amazing self-awareness and offers repentance. God relents and says,

“Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.” (1Kings 21:29)

Thus, Yahweh delays the destruction upon Ahab’s house that he has promised.

Ahab’s Defeat and Death (1 Kings 22:29-40)

As chapter 22 opens, the reader should understand that Ahab stands under a prophetic curse. God’s full wrath, while delayed until the reign of Ahab’s son will still be poured out. And in these verses, having had Ahab’s death previously foretold by two prophets (20:41-42; 21:19), we will see that come to pass as well. Here, yet a third prophet appears as Ahab will march out yet a third time to battle against the Syrians.

In verses 1-5, We see Israel had experienced peace with Syria for three years. Syria had, however, kept the strategic city of Ramoth-Gilead. Ahab wanted to take it back with the help of Jehoshaphat, who was now king of Judah. As 1 Kings has slowed down to spend time following the northern kingdom of Israel (15:25-21:29), the telling of the story of the goings on in Judah has been suspended. Here though, we see Ahab enlisting the help of Judah’s king.

Jehoshaphat agrees to join Ahab in battle, but only after prophetic consultation (vs 1-5). Four hundred false prophets, probably those cultivated and maintained by Jezebel, are eager to please Ahab by flattery, spin their counsel favorably (vs 5-6). Jehoshaphat is skeptical and requests a prophet of Yahweh to speak (v 7). Ahab calls upon Micaiah, son of Imlah (v 8). Micaiah first goes along with the false prophets (vs 9-15).

But the king [Ahab] said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” (1Kings 22:16)

Micaiah, after identifying the false prophets as being given over to delusion by Yahweh (1 Sam 16:14-15; Jer 14:14; Jer 23:16; Ezek 13:2) because they do not love the truth and speak their own words, tells the truth that Ahab will suffer defeat and death, and Israel will be without a king:

And he [Micaiah] said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master; let each return to his home in peace.’” (1Kings 22:17)

Ahab arrests Micaiah (vs 24-28). In verses 29 through 36, after some trickery and deception by Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Ahab is struck by a random arrow, in the joint of his armor, and he ultimately dies in battle. This confirms Micaiah as the true prophet amid the 400 false prophets.

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. (1Kings 22:37-38)

Elijah's prophecy in chapter 21:19 is fulfilled. The entire passage underscores the hardness of Ahab's heart against the Word of God, that all prophecy is under God's sovereign rule, and that prophecy (and thus true prophets) shaped Israel's history.

So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place. (1Kings 22:40)

Jehoshaphat Reigns in Judah (870—848 BC) (1 Kings 22:41-50)

The author now shifts back to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. (1Kings 22:41-42a)

Some of his successes and failures are listed. Like his father Asa, he removed the cult prostitutes from Judah, but not the high places. Politically, he rules over Edom, and as we have seen, made peace with Ahab. The reader will learn more of Jehoshaphat in chapter 3 of 2 Kings, in what seems to be a flashback.

For now, we see the typical formula in 1 Kings,

And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place. (1Kings 22:50)

Ahaziah Reigns in Israel (853-852 BC) (1 Kings 22:51-53)

1 Kings closes with a return to the northern Kingdom of Israel and Ahab's son Ahaziah. The reader might be inclined to hope that he might see his father's life and reign over Israel as a cautionary tale. However, what is seen is Ahaziah diving headlong into sin and the idolatry that has characterized most Israel's kings to this point.

Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. He did what was 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. He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done. (1Kings 22:51-53)

His reign is short but sinful, as 2 Kings continues to document.

Conclusion

As the saga continues in 2 Kings, there is no conclusion except the one offered after Solomon's fall from grace and unceremonious death. From that point on, the kingdom divides, Judah in the south has remained somewhat stable with the temple and Levitical sacrificial system intact with covenant worship occurring. After the division, Israel, in the north quickly loses stability and true worship of Yahweh. During the same approximate timespan Judah has four kings, whereas Israel has eight – who become increasingly wicked, leading Israel into apostasy.

One lesson for us is that human hearts are easily deceived and easily wander from the true worship of the true God. God's people must cultivate a relationship with Him through obedience to God's Word. Another lesson is that we will be ruled by something – whether the true and living God, false gods, or even our own faulty autonomy. We must long for the King who rules in justice, defends the needy, establishes prosperity and dominion, has pity and compassion on the weak, ends oppression, and defeats the enemies of Yahweh.