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Day 156 - June 5

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## **The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)**

### **Ahab and Jezebel**

**Readings: 1 Kings 20:1-21:29; 1 Kings 22:51, 2 Chronicles 18:2,3; 1 Kings 22:2-28; Also see 2 Chronicles 18:4-27**

### ***Reflections:***

- The first story of this section is about Ahab and his battle with Ben-Hadad. Ahab simply does not have a heart to understand or follow God even when God is incredibly gracious. Ahab always leans towards evil. First, when threatened he quickly and easily hands over his wealth and even his household. In his selfish desire for self-preservation, he simply gives over whatever Ben-Hadad demands. In fact, when Ben-Hadad is going to strip him of everything through a thorough search, only then does he consult his elders and the people. Notice he doesn't consult God. He is a people pleaser. They all tell him, "Don't do it." Finally God steps in and tries to show Ahab that God can protect him even when he has very little to offer God. God chooses to use young men who are obviously inexperienced and a very small number of soldiers, just seven thousand. Most of the armies are in the tens of thousands or a hundred thousand. The first battle proves that God is the one who gives the victory as this badly outnumbered army handles Ben-Hadad's forces easily. Round two is set for the spring. Again God tries to show that he can be trusted. He declares to Ahab, "I will deliver this vast army into your hands and you will know I am the Lord." Israel is badly outnumbered and again they easily win the battle. Now the defeated Ben-Hadad begs for mercy and again without consulting God or understanding God's judgment against Ben-Hadad, Ahab calls him his brother and makes a treaty with Ben-Hadad, returning him to freedom. Once again we see that Ahab simply does not care about God's leadership or what God has said. He ends up siding with the enemy and evil even in the midst of God seeking to reveal to him that God is the one he can trust.
- Ahab is then to be confronted by a prophet. In this second story we see something that is hard to understand at first. The prophet carrying the word of the Lord commands one of his companions to strike him so that he will bleed. The man refuses even though apparently he knew that this prophet had been given a word from God. That man comes under immediate judgment for not honoring God's direction to this man, even though it outwardly looked like a terrible thing to do. This guy is killed by a lion and so we see this

is the second time someone out of a prophet's camp is killed by a lion for dishonoring the word of the Lord. This no doubt is again helping the reader experience some healthy fear of the Lord. When God asks you to do something, even if it looks wrong from your perspective, do it! Anyways, the prophet confronts Ahab for the very same sin. Ahab dishonored the word of the Lord and now his life was under judgment. He would die for his sin. Ahab starts to pout. His character is again revealed as childish and selfish.

- This self-centeredness of Ahab is clearly shown in the very next story. He finds a vineyard he wants and like a little boy throwing a temper tantrum, he pouts and whines until he can have it. Jezebel shows how evil she is as without any sense of conscience, sets up a day of fasting (a day intended to have all Israel be focused on God alone) so that the owner can be falsely accused and then stoned to death. All of this just so Ahab will stop whining. It is brutal and makes plain to the reader just how evil these two people are. Jezebel is cold and heartless through and through. Elijah re-enters the scene to pronounce God's judgment and at this, Ahab repents, apparently with full authenticity. This stays God's judgment in the moment, but it remains over his house. God knows that evil is entrenched in Ahab and Jezebel and so the judgment remains.
- The next account between Jehoshaphat and Ahab is again revealing. They make an alliance with the hope of reclaiming Ramoth Gilead. They first inquire of four hundred prophets to find out if they will be successful. It would seem that these are not necessarily prophets of Yahweh because Jehoshaphat wants to know if there was a "prophet of the Lord" that they could inquire of. Where are these four hundred Baal prophets? Anyways, it isn't clear. All we know is that the four hundred prophets are giving these two kings the message they wanted to hear. Well, at first Micaiah says exactly the same thing, apparently sarcastically, because they don't believe he is being honest. Micaiah then responds honestly and in his declaration pulls back the spiritual veil to reveal what is happening in the spiritual realm. It is fascinating. We get to see a drama unfold in God's presence as God determines how he will bring about judgment on Ahab. Now we have in this story some moral questions. What is God doing sending a lying spirit? Is this an evil spirit that is under God's control, like with King Saul? I think it is safe to assume that based on the overarching story of Scripture. So this lying spirit is setting Ahab up for how God will judge him. This is again meant to warn the reader. Be careful of consistently rejecting what God is saying to you. You may no longer get the truth from God but may be bound over to a destructive deception. Anyways, Micaiah does explain the truth and the judgment that awaits them but they just won't accept it. The confrontation reveals how hard their hearts have become. When Micaiah declares, "Mark my words, all you people!" you know what is coming!