

# I & II Kings



## Lesson 5 – Chapters 1 Kings 17:1–22:40

### Ahab and Elijah

Ahab was a man of distinction. However, this was not the distinction that God finds commendable. We note, “And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, *more than all who were before him*” (1 Kings 16:30; emphasis added). While other northern kings found new ways to do horrible things, Ahab outdid them all. His marriage to Jezebel opened a Pandora’s box of detestable worship. A nation already worshipping golden calves at Bethel and Dan now added the Phoenician god, Baal, to their worship menagerie. 1 Kings 16:32 notes that Ahab erected a house of worship to Baal in Samaria. He also encouraged the worship of Baal’s female counterpart, the goddess Asherah, often portrayed in female images carved into wooden poles. Temple prostitutes made up her retinue.

Baal (ba’al; “lord” or “husband”) was a god of giving and destroying. Often portrayed as the sun god, Baal’s warmth and light grew abundant crops. Conversely, his searing rays burnt up vegetation during times of drought. Sacrifices to Baal took many forms, generally that of livestock, but during the harshest conditions they even included the destruction of first-born children. Worshipers found a god and goddess whom they could manipulate for their benefit. Ahab crossed the line into detestable worship practices by replacing the God of life with the gods of death.

Today, we look back and wonder how things took such a wrong turn under Ahab. In reality, it is not that difficult to understand; when we silence God’s Word, we permit everything.

### Elijah, a Man of God

Enter Elijah, the antithesis of everything Ahab was or stood for, a man called by God to confront evil eyeball to eyeball. What we are about to learn is that God had not given up on Ahab or the people He once called His own. Elijah’s actions set before us the wonderful patience of God as well as His abundant mercy. While Ahab sought to eliminate God and put false gods and goddesses in His place, God deliberately sought him out.

The writer of 1 Kings does not set the stage for the encounter between Ahab and Elijah. Instead, Elijah seems to appear out of nowhere (17:1). The battle pitting Ahab, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal against the man of God was on.

49. What comes to mind when you consider God’s love for Ahab?
50. Elijah prefigured the forerunner to the Messiah. Who is he (see Lk 3:2–6)?

## **No Rain!**

Read 1 Kings 17:1–24. Worshipers of Baal and Asherah believed they could manipulate their gods to cause it to rain. Elijah carried God’s word of a three-year drought to King Ahab. Fearing for his life, Elijah fled from Ahab’s presence.

51. How did God care for His prophet Elijah (vv. 5–6)?
52. Zarephath was located between Tyre and Sidon. The drought brought hardships for a widow and her son living there. How did God show His mercy to Elijah? to the widow and her son?

## **Trial by Fire**

Read 1 Kings 18:1–46. Three years of drought had passed when the Lord called upon Elijah to confront Ahab with the news that God was ready to end the drought (v. 1), setting up a dramatic display of His authority over the weather.

53. In your own words, describe the contest God used to witness to Ahab and all those with him at Mount Carmel (vv. 20–41).

## **Elijah’s Self-doubt**

Read 1 Kings 19:1–21. Ahab raced to share the news with Jezebel, who vowed to kill Elijah. Filled with self-doubt, Elijah fled south to Mount Horeb (Sinai) where God spoke to him in a “low whisper” (v. 12).

54. Discuss a time when you felt pained by self-doubt, but God reassured you.

God gave Elijah three assignments at Horeb: anoint Hazael king over Syria, anoint Jehu king over Israel, and anoint Elisha as his successor (vv. 15–16).

## **Ahab and Ben-hadad**

Read 1 Kings 20:1–43. Ben-hadad of Syria mocked God (v. 10).

55. Explain how God used Ahab, an evil king, to exact justice on Ben-hadad.

When Ahab refused to destroy Ben-hadad, a man whom God had determined must die for his sinfulness, one of the Lord’s other prophets prophesied Ahab’s death, his life in exchange for Ben-hadad’s.

## **Naboth’s Vineyard and Ahab’s Death**

Read 1 Kings 21:1–22:40. These verses recount the treachery of Queen Jezebel, an additional prophecy against Ahab, and Ahab’s death. Naboth owned a vineyard near Ahab’s palace that he refused to sell. Jezebel arranged false witnesses to say that Naboth cursed God and the king, a crime punishable by death. Enter Elijah.

56. Murder does not escape God. Whom does God hold accountable (21:17–23)?

57. Another war erupted between Israel and Syria. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, united with Ahab to recapture Ramoth-gilead (22:1–4). In an attempt to prevent God’s prophecy from being completed, Ahab disguised himself. What happened to Ahab “at random,” fulfilling all Elijah had foretold (vv. 34–37)?

### **God’s Word for Today**

God’s Word never fails. God offered Ahab repeated opportunities to return to Him, only to be rebuffed by Ahab’s unrepentance.

58. How might individuals today rebuff God as Ahab did? Should they anticipate similar results? (See James 4:4.)
59. James returns to the story of Elijah in James 5:17–20. What do these verses teach us about God’s forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake?

### **In Closing**

- † Talk about how God sought after Ahab.
- † Consult a Bible dictionary or other reliable resource for additional information on Elisha.
- † Read **1 Kings 22:41–2 Kings 7:20** to prepare for the next session.