

The Book of 1 Kings



Part 9
4 more studies in 1 Kings

Introduction

The two books, 1 & 2 Kings, in the Hebrew Old Testament were one book. It was divided by the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) translators. They summarized these books as follows: I The Reign of Solomon; II Division of the Kingdom, and Parallel History of the Two Kingdoms; III Subsequent History of Judah to the Captivity.

1 Kings opens with the Hebrew nation in its glory. 2 Kings closes with the nation in ruin. Together they cover a period of about 400 years, from 1000-600 BC.

Author

The author is not known. A Jewish tradition says it was Jeremiah. Whoever the author is, he makes frequent reference to state annals and other historical records existent in his day, such as: “The book of the acts of Solomon”; “The book of chronicles of the Kings of Judah”; and “The book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (1 Kings 11:41; 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31; 16:5, 14, 27 etc.).

Brief Outline of 1 & 2 Kings

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|---|------------------------------|
| 1. The last days of David and Solomon’s Accession | 1 Kings 1:1 – 1 Kings 2:46 |
| 2. The reign of Solomon | 1 Kings 3:1 – 1 Kings 11:43 |
| 3. History of the Divided Kingdom | 1 Kings 12:1 – 2 Kings 10:36 |
| 4. History of Judah & Israel to fall of North Kingdom | 2 Kings 11:1 – 2 Kings 17:41 |
| 5. History of Judah to the fall of Jerusalem | 2 Kings 18:1 – 2 Kings 25:30 |

Alternative Outline of 1 & 2 Kings

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|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Golden Age | 1 Kings 1-11 |
| 2. The Torn Kingdom | 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17 |
| 3. The Last Days | 2 Kings 18-25 |

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

Study 1 – In prayer and on the run

1 Kings 18:41-46
(Sermon on 09-Oct – Paul)

Before we begin: Summarize what occurred in 1 Kings 18:1-40

God told Elijah that He would soon break the drought that God instigated in chapter 17 because of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel's disobedience of God and worship of Baal and Asherah. God couldn't simply break the drought by sending rain, otherwise the people of Israel would think that Baal had finally answered their prayers and sent rain.

So, Elijah, God's prophet, through God's power, challenged the 450 false prophets of Baal to a God contest. They would prepare a bull to be sacrificed and call upon Baal to consume the sacrifice with fire; and Elijah would also prepare bull to be sacrificed and call upon the Lord God, YHWH, of Israel. Whichever god consumed the sacrifice with fire was the real God. Elijah even made his sacrifice more difficult by drenching it with heaps of water. Of course, the false prophets of Baal cried out all day to their false god, Baal, and nothing happened. Elijah taunted them that their god was perhaps too busy or even asleep or travelling! Then Elijah cried out to the Lord God and his sacrifice was consumed by fire instantly. The people realized YHWH was the Real God. Elijah had the false prophets killed as punishment for their apostasy (as per Deuteronomy 13). Now the rain can come...

1. What was promised in verse 1 of chapter 18?

God promised He would send rain on the land.

Read 1 Kings 18:41-46

2. What does Elijah tell Ahab to do in verse 41? Why?

Elijah tells Ahab he can go and eat for there is the sound of heavy rain.

Elijah knew that once the official worship of Baal had been defeated by discrediting Baal and his false prophets, the purpose for the drought was fulfilled. Rain was on the way. Elijah and Ahab would now each do what they wanted to do — Elijah would pray and Ahab would eat — i.e., go home for dinner — perhaps a celebratory meal (see Exodus 24:4-11 and Ecclesiastes 5:18 and 9:7).

3. What contrast is there between Ahab and Elijah in verse 42?

*The **contrast** is: Ahab going to **eat and drink** whilst Elijah went for some quiet time to **pray**. A contrast between King and Prophet. A contrast between physical and spiritual.*

4. What are we to make of Elijah's intensity in verse 42? What is Elijah doing? (cf. James 5:18)

Elijah went to the summit of Mount Carmel, the scene of this great victory and bent to the ground and put his face between his knees. He is praying as per James 5:18; because the rain hasn't quite arrived yet.

This was an unusual posture of prayer for Elijah. He wasn't kneeling, he wasn't sitting, he wasn't standing, and he didn't lay prostrate before the LORD. This shows that the power in prayer resides in faith in the living God.

5. What are we to make of Elijah's persistence in verse 43?

*This was stubbornly persistent prayer. It was as if Elijah would not take "no" for an answer, because he had confidence that God's will was to send rain. He stubbornly furthered the will of God by his persistent prayer. Didn't Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7-8-
⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. The tense of the ask, seek and knock verbs is: keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking. Not because we have the power in prayer – only God has the power in prayer – but to show God our faith and that we really want His answer and we wait upon His answer!*

God's promises are given, not to restrain, but to incite to prayer. They show the direction in which we may ask, and the extent to which we may expect an answer They are the mould into which we may pour our fervid spirits without fear." (Meyer)

6. How does Elijah's prayers here compare to 1 Kings 17:20-21 and 1 Kings 18:36-37?

In 1 Kings 17:20-21 – Elijah pleaded to God for the widow's son's life to return to him and God answered immediately.

In 1 Kings 18:36-37 – On Mount Carmel, when it was his turn to cry out to the Lord to consume his sacrifice; He asked God to answer him so that the people would know the Lord, is the Real God. Again, God answered immediately.

In this case, here in 1 Kings 18:42-44 – Elijah had to pray 7 times (a holy number; God's number).

7. **Ponder:** What can we learn from Elijah's prayer and how is it different to the prophets of Baal's prayers in 1 Kings 18:26-29?

Elijah's prayer is a simple prayer of persistent faith.

There is no babbling and crying out like the prophets of Baal.

Elijah's prayer is not relying on his power but God's power.

Elijah prays in faith and then sends a servant to go check if the prayer has been answered; knowing God will answer in His own perfect timing.

8. On what basis can Elijah have confidence that there will be rain? (cf. 1 Kings 8:35-36 and 1 Kings 18:1)

In 1 Kings 8:35-36 – when King Solomon dedicated the Temple of God in Jerusalem; King Solomon prayed that if God had shut up the heavens and there was no rain in the land because the people had sinned; and if the people repented; God would forgive them and send rain. It's like Elijah is "piggybacking" on that prayer of King Solomon.

In 1 Kings 18:1 – God has already told Elijah that He will send rain – so Elijah can have confidence in God’s Word that what He says, will always come to pass.

9. How do we explain the way God responds to Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 18:38 with the way God responds to Elijah’s prayer in verses 42 to 44a?

The prayer of 1 Kings 18:38 to discredit Baal and his false prophets needed to happen straightaway to show God’s power over Baal and over apostasy. The prayer of Elijah for rain is not as urgent because victory over Baal is already proven; the outworking of this victory can be in God’s timing and give time for Elijah to demonstrate his persistent faith in the Lord.

10. What faith does Elijah show in verse 44b?

Once Elijah’s servant had reported a “cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea”; Elijah knew God had answered his prayer; that was enough proof. Elijah showed complete faith in what God was about to do!

11. **Ponder:** Is it surprising that King Ahab listens to Elijah’s command to ‘hitch up his chariot and go down before the rain stops you’?

Not surprising really. Ahab had witnessed a supernatural event at Mount Carmel and had seen the god he worshipped, Baal, completely discredited. Unfortunately, although Ahab now knew that the Lord God, YHWH, was the Real God; the influence and power that his wife, Jezebel, wielded had too much sway over him, to yield to the Real God.

12. **Ponder:** what will the heavy rain in verse 45 mean to Israel?

The heavy rain of verse 45 meant the end of the drought for Israel and that crops could once again be grown and harvested; and people could once more be properly fed. Heavy rain meant water for soil, people and livestock; it meant grain for food, grass for animals (18:5)

13. What supernatural activity happens in verse 46?

Elijah, with the power of the Lord upon him, was able to run ahead of King Ahab and his chariot, from Mount Carmel to Jezreel. This is a distance of up to 24km (15 miles).

14. **Ponder:** Why is it important to God that Elijah (the prophet) runs before Ahab (the King) all the way to Jezreel? Is there perhaps a “sign” here for Ahab?

*What a **contrast** – Ahab **rides** whilst Elijah **runs**!*

Firstly; it shows Elijah is neither ashamed or afraid of what he has done (with God’s help) on Mount Carmel.

*Secondly, if Elijah (the prophet) is **running ahead of/before** Ahab (the King) it means that Ahab is **following** Elijah; it symbolizes the restoration of the proper order in Israel: The King following the prophet (who is the messenger from the Lord). It implies that God is placing a demand*

upon Ahab. Ahab is not to operate in his own autocratic way but submit to the divine word of God. Royal power must seek prophetic direction from God; that's the picture we are meant to see. Just as the people had to make a decision on Mount Carmel about the Real God; so too, Ahab has to make a decision. God is offering grace to Ahab [the one who allowed Baal worship; gave approval for a Baal temple and altar; who participated in that Baal worship himself; who gave in to his wicked wife Jezebel and stood by and allowed her to butcher the Lord's prophets; and who pursued God's prophet Elijah relentlessly]. Yet God offered incredible grace. But Ahab has to accept that grace. Will he? Or will he go to Jezebel and continue on the wrong path? We will see in the next study...

Read James 5:13-20

15. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 18:41-46?

James encourages us to pray in faith. Whether we are in trouble or when we are happy. He gives the example of someone being sick in the church. They are to call the elders of the church to pray over and anoint the sick person in the name of the Lord. And James says such prayer offered in faith (i.e., the faith of the sick person and the faith of the elders praying over them will make the sick person well).

James also reminds that prayer should also include confession (i.e., if a person has sinned, they will be forgiven). Sometimes confession is left out of prayers, isn't it?

And James reminds us in verse 16 that the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective!

*James also **uses Elijah as an example of a prayer of faith** in verses 17 and 18. James says that Elijah prayed for it not to rain (1 Kings 17:1) and it didn't rain for 3 and half years; and then Elijah prayed again (18:41-45) and it rained and the earth produced its crops!*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of 1 Kings 18:41-46?

The power of persistent faithful prayer.



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways does this passage point to Jesus, if at all?

Jesus was in constant communication with God, the Father.

Jesus always prayed in the Father's will (as in the Garden of Gethsemane)

Often before his miracles, Jesus would pray for the Father to be glorified.

Ahab is offered grace; will he accept it? Jesus says "come, follow me" – people have a choice to accept or not!

How does this passage **apply to your life**?

a. God promised rain and He always keeps His promise; even if it took 3 years or so!

- b. *The posture for prayer is not important but the desire to pray and praying in faith. As Meyer says “those who stand straightest in the presence of sin, bow lowest in the presence of God”. Elijah’s posture is one of intense concentrated prayer.*
- c. *Our prayers need to be persistent and in faith (as per Matthew 7:7-8 – ask, seek and knock and keep on asking, seeking and knocking)*
- d. *God will answer prayers that are according to His will [God had said there would be rain – so Elijah knows it’s God’s will and knows/believes it will be answered!]. **God wills to send rain and He wills that His will come to pass through Elijah’s prayer.***
- e. *Note the prayer life of Elijah and don’t see him as a super Baal busting prophet – Elijah is repeatedly reduced to helplessness in prayer – he prays for life (17:20-21) and for fire (18:36-37) and for rain (18:42) and for ‘dismissal to die’ (19:4). Elijah has no power to produce any of this. Elijah can only confess his helplessness and pray. Prayer is a humbling experience sometimes.*
- f. *What constitutes a “a cloud as small as a man’s hand” for us to be spurred on in faith.*
- g. *The scene of Elijah (the prophet) running before Ahab’s (the King’s) chariot is a sign of God’s order – the King following God’s prophet – and a sign of God’s incredible grace – but God allows people a choice – to accept or reject His grace – and similarly to accept or reject the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!*
- h. *How’s our prayer life? Are we praying for one another? If we are sick, do we ask the elders to pray over us and anoint us? Do we confess our sins when we pray or go straight to asking God for something?*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V44 - The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” So, Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”

V45 - Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that He answers prayers and that He is in control of all things (even the weather).

Study 2 – How God deals with broken people

1 Kings 19:1-18

(Sermon on 16-Oct – Paul)

Before we begin: Remind yourself what happened in 1 Kings 18.

In Chapter 18, there was a God contest between Elijah and the 450 prophets of the false God of Baal. The false prophets called/prayed all day for Baal to rain down fire and accept their sacrifice; but Baal did not answer. Then Elijah prayed to the one true God of Israel, YHWH, and God answered immediately and consumed his sacrifice with fire immediately.

Then Elijah prayed for God to keep His promise of 18:1 and send rain. Elijah had to persevere in prayer; sending his servant seven times to check if the rain was coming; before God answered and sent the rain.

Then Elijah ran before King Ahab all the way to Jezreel; and we said the idea of the prophet running ahead of the King, was symbolic of God's order being restored; where the King of Israel was supposed to follow the prophet, who is God's mouthpiece. We said, God was offering grace to King Ahab, and had to now follow God's way and not his own way. As King Ahab approached Jezreel, would he repent and return to the Lord; or would he listen to the wicked influence of his evil wife, Jezebel...

Read 1 Kings 19:1-9a

1. How did Jezebel react to Ahab's news of the events of Mount Carmel? Is this surprising?

Wouldn't we expect Jezebel to be convinced by the events at Mount Carmel?

King Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done on Mount Carmel and how Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal. Jezebel's reaction was to send a messenger to Elijah to say he would kill him just like he had killed the prophets of Baal.

You would think that such evidence from King Ahab would be enough to convince Jezebel. But Jezebel's heart is hardened to anything related to the one true God, YHWH, and her heart is set on Baal and Baal worship. As John 3:19 puts it: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil".

2. How does Elijah react in verse 3 to Jezebel's message? Why?

Elijah was afraid and he ran for his life. Why? Elijah saw that despite what had happened at Mount Carmel, nothing was going to change in Israel. Ahab had failed to convince Jezebel that things had changed with the defeat of the Baal prophets. Jezebel still wears the pants and is still calling the shots in the Kingdom. Elijah was not required to be easy meat for Jezebel's guillotine. So, Elijah ran.

3. Use the map in appendix 1 to trace Elijah's travels.

Elijah ran as far as the southernmost point in Israel. Beersheba. See red rectangle.

4. Would Elijah be safe at Beersheba?

He would be safe from the clutches of Jezebel in the southernmost point of Israel. 160Km (100 miles) from Jezebel to Beersheba.

5. What are we to make of Elijah's prayer in verse 4?

Elijah then leaves his servant at Beersheba in Judah and went further into the wilderness (a day's journey) alone. He tells God "I have had enough, Lord...Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors".

Elijah perhaps thought he had done exhausting stressful work at Mount Carmel, but it hadn't resulted in a national revival or a return to the Lord. He thought his work had all been in vain. Elijah had perhaps forgot that people reject the Lord despite the evidence not because of the evidence.

6. **Ponder:** Is Elijah psychotic, depressed or just simply broken? What do you think?

Elijah had run as far as Beersheba to get away from the clutches of Jezebel.

His journey into the wilderness is not because he is psychotic (lost touch with reality) – it's not because he thinks Jezebel is going to come after him - but because he is a broken man, who no longer has the wherewithal to keep going and he can't humanly speaking see a way forward. He perhaps forgot this is the Lord's work and saw it as only his work?

7. How does God provide for Elijah in verse 5? Why didn't God answer Elijah's prayer of verse 4? (cf. 1 John 5:14-15)

Elijah fell asleep under a bush. God did not answer Elijah's prayer and take his life. God did not answer Elijah's prayer to die because God had other plans and because prayers (as we said last week) have to be according to God's will; and it was not God's will for Elijah to die.

8. How does God provide for Elijah in verses 6 to 8a?

Instead of the death that Elijah prays for; God provides for Elijah: an angel to wake him up to eat (v5); bread baked over hot coals; and a jar of water (v6); an angel to wake him up to eat a second time (v7); and more food to strengthen him for the journey ahead (v8).

This may well have reminded Elijah of the incident of bread/water with the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-24). And also, the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness during the Exodus from Egypt.

9. Where does Elijah travel to next in verses 8b and 9? See map in appendix 1.

Strengthened by the food, Elijah travels 40 days and 40 nights from the wilderness to the mountain of Horeb; where he spent the night in a cave. See Blue rectangle on map.

10. What's significant about forty days and nights and Mount Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God, in verse 8b?

Mount Horeb (aka Mount Sinai) is where Moses received the 10 commandments. Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on the mountain (Exodus 24:18 and Deuteronomy 9:9-11).

This is a time of spiritual renewal for Elijah. The journey from the wilderness to Horeb could be a lot shorter than 40 days; God used this time to spiritual “repair” and “prepare” Elijah for the next phase of his ministry.

11. Given the previous question, should we expect that God is about to act further?

Yes indeed. Also, the fact that God sent an angel to strengthen Elijah twice suggests God has further plans for Elijah...

Read 1 Kings 19:9b-18

12. Is the question of verse 9b (which is repeated in verse 13) an accusation or something else?

Given that the Lord has a) not answered Elijah’s prayer to die; and b) sustained him twice with an angel giving food and drink and c) strengthened him for a journey to a key location in Old Testament history. We’d have to conclude, God has led Elijah to Horeb, rather than Elijah going there of his own accord.

Therefore, rather than seeing the question “What are you doing here, Elijah?” in verses 9b and 13 as an accusation; it’s more like a tender invitation “What are you doing here (do you think) Elijah?” or paraphrasing “Why do you think I’ve brought you to Horeb, is this a significant place for you to be?”

13. What are we to make of Elijah’s replies to the same question in verses 10 and 14?

It’s an opportunity for Elijah to be completely honest with God and unburden his soul.

In v10 and v14 Elijah replies in exactly the same way to the same question – Elijah says truly that he has been very zealous for the Lord and that the Israelites have rejected God’s covenant with them; torn down His altars and killed the Lord’s prophets; and that Elijah himself is the only one left and they are trying to kill him too!

It’s not self-pity but it is an honest assessment of how Elijah sees things in God’s Kingdom and Elijah describes honestly the state of the nation before God.

14. What amazing things happen in verses 11 and 12?

In between the two questions and replies. God says to Elijah to stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord and He will pass by (v11)

A wind came and tore the mountain apart and shattered the rocks – but the Lord was not in the wind. An earthquake came next – but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then a fire – but the Lord was not in the fire. Then came a gentle whisper!

15. What amazing contrast is there between the power God displays in various phenomena and the way God actually communicates with Elijah in verse 12b and 13?

God spoke through the gentle whisper. God actually met Elijah in the gentle whisper rather than the earth-shaking phenomenon that had gone before.

God speaks to us through His Word – not necessarily through great signs and wonders – but of course He can do that too!

God deals gently with His servants!

16.Ponder: What do you think the purpose was for Elijah coming to Horeb/Sinai?

God brought Elijah to Horeb/Sinai – to repair and prepare him – to encourage him and instruct him for the next part of his ministry.

*Remember, Elijah felt alone. This time of spiritual and physical refreshment shows Elijah that **he is not alone** and that **God has listened to him**.*

17.What task does God give Elijah in verse 15? Refer to map in appendix 1.

*He is to go to the desert of Damascus in the North. **See red oval on map.** There Elijah is to anoint Hazael as King over Aram (aka Syria). We will meet Hazael again in 2 Kings 8:7-29.*

18.What instructions and assurances does God give Elijah in verses 16 to 17? What does this say about God?

*God also tells Elijah to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as King over Israel to succeed the corrupt King Ahab and to anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat, to succeed Elijah as prophet (v16). **God is always busy preparing things ahead of time!***

God will use Jehu and Hazael and Elisha to make sure no one escapes God's judgment on Israel (v17)

This was another source of encouragement to Elijah. With this promise he knew that ultimately justice would be done, and God would not allow the institutionalized persecution and promotion of idolatry to go unpunished.

19.What wonderful encouragement is there in verse 18?

There is a faithful remnant in Israel. God has reserved 7000 who have not worshipped Baal and have remained faithful to the Lord God of Israel. What a wonderful encouragement to Elijah that his ministry is not in vain after all!

Read Romans 11:1-6

20. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:1-18?

In this passage the Apostle Paul – asks the rhetorical question “Did God reject His people (Israel)?”. And the resounding answer is “by no means!”. Paul himself is an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul's proof that God has not rejected Israel is to quote from 1 Kings 19 and how Elijah appealed to God against Israel saying that they have killed His prophets and torn down His altars and that Elijah is the only one left and

they are trying to kill him. God's answer to Elijah, Paul says, is that God has reserved a remnant of faithful people – 7000 people! And Paul argues that even in his time, there is a remnant of Israel chosen by God's grace. Paul is saying God will always have a true/faithful people including Israelite people!

Read Matthew 17:1-13

21. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:1-18?

In 1 Kings 19 – Elijah (the prophet) ended up on the same mountain as Moses (the Law giver). In Matthew 17:1-3 – Jesus – the complete fulfilment of the law and the prophets – is on a mountain with Elijah (representing the prophets) and Moses (representing the Law).

Read Matthew 16:17-20

22. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:1-18?

In Matthew 16:17-20, the Apostle Peter (v16) has just confessed that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.

Jesus blesses Peter's testimony and says He will build His church on the "rock" of Peter's testimony that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God.

The statement by Jesus "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" is a promise that Jesus' church (God's people) will always exist – and that's equivalent to God saying to Elijah "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal..."

Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

23. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:1-18?

*The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 struggled with what he described as a "thorn in his flesh" (v7). We're not told what that "thorn in his flesh" was. But even though Paul pleaded with the Lord to take it away from him; God simply told Paul "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness**". Even with this "weakness" Paul, through the Lord's power and strength was able to achieve mighty things for the Lord.*

In the same way, Elijah, was shown grace in his weakness – which we do know – was "brokenness" and "despondency" at the apparent failure of his ministry. But God's grace was also sufficient for Elijah and God revealed to him there was a remnant and that there was more work for Elijah to do, in God's strength.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of 1 Kings 19:1-18?

God deals graciously with His broken servants

OR

An assurance that - God will have and keep a true people – that no Jezebel can prevail against



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways does this passage point to Jesus, if at all?

- *God's grace in dealing with Elijah points to God's grace in dealing with us and our sin – by sending Jesus.*
- *1 Kings 19:18 (7000 remnant) is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament Matthew 16:18 – “I will build my church”*
- *40 days/nights should remind us of Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days/nights and Jesus was also attended to by angels (Matthew 4:1-11)*

How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *Just because we have the truth about Jesus and can give clear reasons/evidence for following Jesus; does not mean everyone is going to listen and turn to Jesus. Jezebel is our teacher about what the human heart is like.*
- b. *People reject the Lord despite the evidence not because of the evidence.*
- c. *Elijah perhaps saw his ministry as HIS ministry and not the LORD's ministry. He perhaps felt that everything depended on him – not the Lord. We can be like that?*
- d. *Prayers have to be according to God's will.*
- e. *God gives us what we need (Elijah given food and water to strengthen him for the journey) and not always what we want (Elijah wanted to die)*
- f. *When we are broken; we all need periods of spiritual “repair” and a time to “be prepared” by God for the next part of our service to the Lord.*
- g. *Do we get despondent or depressed for God's sake? At the state of our world? Our nation? Christianity? The worldwide Church? Our Church?*
- h. *God speaks to us through His Word – not necessarily great signs and wonders! It shows that displays of power and preaching God's anger don't necessarily change hearts. Instead, the still small voice of God speaking to the human heart is actually more powerful than outward displays of power or displays of God's judgment.*
- i. *God deals gently (through a gentle whisper) with his servants. Psalm 46:10 – be still and know that I am God.*
- j. *God will ultimately not allow idolatry and apostasy to go unpunishment. There will be justice!*
- k. *In God's grace there will always be a faithful remnant! There is nothing any Jezebel can do about it.*
- l. *We need not fear being a broken servant of God when we have such a kind and faithful God. God's grace is sufficient for us too!*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

1 Kings 19:18 – “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that He cares about the brokenness of His servants. Thanking God that He always preserves a remnant of His people throughout history. Thanking God for the Church of our Lord Jesus and that nothing can prevail against Jesus' Church!

Study 3– Leaving the Farm

1 Kings 19:19-21
(Sermon on 23-Oct – Paul)

Before we begin: Remind yourself what God told Elijah to do in 1 Kings 19:16 and why?

Elijah was broken after 3 ½ years of a tough ministry. He had announced a drought to King Ahab as God’s punishment for the Ahab, Jezebel and Israel’s idolatry of the false god Baal and apostasy. The drought had lasted over three years and then God said he would send rain. But first God had to use Elijah to discredit the false god Baal and his false 450 prophets; which Elijah did at Mount Carmel. Then God sent the rain after Elijah prayed 7 times. Ahab informed Jezebel of what Elijah had done on Mount Carmel; but Jezebel’s heart was hard; so, she issued a death threat to Elijah; so, he ran away to Beersheba in southern Judah. Then God brought Elijah to Mount Sinai to restore him spiritually and told Elijah he had to anoint Hazael as king of Aram (Syria) and anoint Jehu as King to replace Ahab and v16 anoint Elisha as prophet and Elijah’s successor.

These three appointments were to be God’s instruments in bringing judgement on the sin and rebellion (idolatry/apostasy) of Israel.

All this was great encouragement to Elijah to know he was not alone in his ministry; in fact, he was told there were 7000 people in Israel (v18) who hadn’t worshipped Baal; and now Elijah will also have a prophet, Elisha, to continue on his ministry.

Which brings us to this week’s study and Elijah does what God’s gentle whisper told him to do; but in reverse order, starting with the call of his successor!

Read 1 Kings 19:19-21

1. What was Elisha doing in verse 19 when Elijah showed up?

*Elisha **was at work**, plowing the field, with twelve oxen and he was driving the twelfth pair himself.*

2. What is significant in Elijah throwing his cloak around Elisha in verse 19?

Some translations use mantle for cloak here.

Mantle: a loose sleeveless cloak or shawl. The word mantle has come to be used to describe “an important role or responsibility that passes from one person to the another”

In Hebrew the word can also mean “glory” or “splendour”.

Elijah’s throwing his cloak around Elisha is symbolic of “God’s glory” passing on to Elisha as he will become the Prophet to succeed Elijah.

See also 2 Kings 2:8, 14 – for future incidents with Elijah’s cloak!

3. Remind yourself how Moses was called in **Exodus 3:1-4**.

*Moses too **was at work**; he was tending his father-in-law’s flock in the wilderness and came to Horeb (same mountain as last week when God’s gentle whisper spoke to Elijah). Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in flames from within a bush. The bush although on fire, did not*

burn up! As Moses drew close to the bush, God called to Moses from the bush: "Moses! Moses! Moses simply responded "Here, I am".

4. Remind yourself how Matthew was called in **Matthew 9:9**.

*Jesus saw Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth, **again at work**, and Jesus simply said "Follow me!" And Matthew got up and followed Him.*

5. How does Elisha respond to Elijah's calling in verse 20a?

Elisha stopped working and ran after Elijah; then said "Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye – and then I will come with you".

6. What matter does Elisha want to attend to first in verse 20b? What security is Elisha leaving behind according to verse 19?

Elisha is obedient to the call but yet also respectful to his father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Elisha has a dozen oxen – so it's a fairly big farming operation he has.

7. How does Elijah respond to Elisha's desire to say goodbye to his parents in verse 20b?

Elijah's reply "What have I done to you?" is a strange one!

Can mean "Don't forget what I have just done for you – in calling you as a prophet"

Or could mean (which I prefer) "Don't be long – it's not me who called you – it's God!"

8. How does Elisha show he is committed to Elijah's calling in verse 21?

He slaughtered all the oxen and gave it to the people of town to eat – perhaps for a farewell celebration.

He also had a bonfire with his plowing equipment (the tools of his trade) – to show he had no intention of coming back to this work/lifestyle; his work was with the Lord now!

9. What role is Elisha to play in ministry according to verse 21b?

Elisha is to be Elijah's servant (understudy/apprentice/right hand man).

Read Mark 10:35-45

10. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:19-21?

Two of Jesus' disciples want the glory of sitting at Jesus' right and left in the glory of Heaven (v37)

But Jesus explains that they have no idea what they are asking – they haven't realized that following Jesus – requires a baptism of suffering and persecution – there's not much glory (on Earth at least). There's a cost to be a follower of Jesus. And following Jesus means being a servant and not being served. Besides Jesus showed that even though He is the Son of God – He didn't come to be served like earthly kings; Jesus is a different King – who serves others and even lays down His life for His subjects (many whom are ungrateful).

James and John and the other disciples – need to realize – following Jesus – means being a servant and requires service.

*Elisha is to be a **servant** of God – just like Elijah is.*

Read Luke 9:57-62

11. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:19-21?

This passage clarifies what it means to be one of His followers.

Here's a summary:

- a. There are no fancy hotels/houses to stay in – we may have to rough it*
- b. Jesus doesn't want excuses. One person said they wanted to bury his father first – but his father might not be even unwell yet, let alone dead. How long will that take? Jesus' point is that His work is about "life" (eternal life) and not about death – and His call is immediate! There's an urgency about following Jesus. Another made the excuse that he wanted to say goodbye to his family but Jesus doesn't want procrastination.*
- c. V62 – No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the service in the Kingdom of God – in other words when we commit to following Jesus – we keep our eyes straight ahead following Him – and don't look back and yearn for our old life*

Elisha didn't make any excuses – he showed he was committed – even burning his plow – so he couldn't go back to his old life!

Read Luke 14:25-33

12. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 19:19-21?

In this passage – Jesus wants people to count the cost before following Him.

Jesus is not a false recruiter – He says up front that following Him is costly and we need to think about it first.

Again, to summarize, a follower of Jesus

- a. Must love Jesus more than even his/her family*
- b. Must think about what they will have to lose/give up*
- c. May have to give up everything to follow Jesus*

Elisha – loved God more than His family and took up the mantle offered by Elijah. Elisha thought about what it would cost him to follow Elijah/God – and Elisha was prepared to say goodbye to his family and to give up everything (his plowing business) to follow Elijah/God.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of 1 Kings 19:19-21?

When God/Jesus calls – we **MUST** follow and be totally committed!



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways does this passage point to Jesus, if at all?

- *Elijah calls his successor, Elisha, and thus mirrors Jesus calling His disciples who will continue His work.*

- *The commitment that Elijah/Elisha had is the commitment Jesus requires of His followers*
- *Elijah/Elisha were servants of the Lord God – Jesus was/is the ultimate Servant King*
- *Elisha is an instrument for God’s judgment on Israel; God has appointed His Son to be the ultimate judge*

How does this passage **apply to your life?**

- God/Jesus can call us suddenly!
- God/Jesus may call us to leave/stop what we are doing; to do His work!
- When God/Jesus calls – it is a simple call – and requires our obedience! We will have to walk by faith and not by sight!
- When God/Jesus calls we may have to go up things – our profession, our possession – our security blankets - even leave family members behind (i.e., sacrificial = cost of discipleship!)
- When God/Jesus calls – we must be committed to Him!
- When God/Jesus calls – we must be servants and we are in His service!
- When God/Jesus calls – don’t make excuses!
- When God/Jesus calls – don’t look back and yearn for our old life!
- When God/Jesus calls – we must love Him more than anyone and anything!

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Luke 9:62 - Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Finish in prayer: Thanking Jesus that He calls us to “follow Him”. Ask God to give us willing submissive hearts to follow Jesus and not look back (Luke 9:62).

Study 4– Getting clear about God

1 Kings 20:1-43

(Sermon on 30-Oct – Paul)

Read 1 Kings 20:1-12

1. Who is Ben-Hadad and what does he demand in verses 1 to 3?

Ben-Hadad is the King of Aram (aka Syria).

Back in 1 Kings 15, King Asa of Judah had given Ben-Hadad silver and gold from the Lord's temple, so that Ben-Hadad would break his treaty with King Baasha of Israel.

Here in 1 Kings 20, Ben-Hadad plus 32 other kings with horses and chariots besieged Samaria in Northern Kingdom of Israel. Ben-Hadad sent messengers to King Ahab of Israel saying: "Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine".

2. How does King Ahab respond in verse 4? Is this surprising?

King Ahab answered "Just as you say, my Lord the King. I and all I have are yours".

Not so surprising. We've been given the impression throughout that Ahab is pretty weak and that his wife Jezebel was the strong one and called the shots!

Also, three and half-years of drought, would have weakened Israel's military power; and perhaps Ahab felt he had no choice but to submit to the Ben-Hadad's demands.

Of course, Ahab, never considered for a moment, that he might repent and turn back to God, and ask God to help!

3. How does Ben-Hadad revise his demands in verses 5 & 6?

When Ben-Hadad saw how readily Ahab agreed to his demands; Ben-Hadad increased his demands – he's vows not only to take the silver and gold and Ahab's wives and children; but now also to search the palace and the houses of Ahab's officials and seize everything of value and take it away!

4. How does King Ahab respond to the revised demands in verses 7 to 9?

King Ahab consulted the elders of Israel and explained Ben-Hadad's two sets of demands. Their advice was that Ahab should not listen to or agree to Ben-Hadad's demands.

So, Ahab tells Ben-Hadad's messengers that he agrees to his first demands but not the second demands!

5. How does Ben-Hadad respond to King Ahab's refusal in verse 10? And how does King Ahab respond in verse 11?

On hearing the refusal, Ben-Hadad makes a vow that he will reduce Samaria to rubble.

King Ahab makes a bold speech which is full of wisdom: "One who puts on his armour should not boast like one who takes it off". In other words, we should do our boasting AFTER the battle, not before! Msg says: "think about it – it's easier to start a fight than to end one"

6. What does Ben-Hadad decide to do in verse 12?

Whilst enjoying drinks with the other kings in their tents, Ben-Hadad prepares to attack Samaria.

Read 1 Kings 20:13-22

7. What does the prophet promise King Ahab in verses 13 to 14?

The prophet (unnamed – some suggest Elijah or Elisha in disguise but no evidence of that) promises that the Lord “will give the vast army [of Ben-Hadad’s] into your [Ahab’s] hands, and then you will know that I am Lord”

This will be accomplished by the junior officials under the provincial commanders – and it will be Ahab himself who will start the battle!

8. What victory does King Ahab achieve in verses 15 to 21? What happens to Ben-Hadad?

The 232 junior officers and 7000 Israelites set whilst Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings were drunk in their tents.

Ben-Hadad scouts spotted the Israelites approaching and informed Ben-Hadad, who ordered that the Israelites be taken alive.

The junior officers and the Israelite army enjoyed a great victory.

The Arameans fled with the Israelites in pursuit.

Ben-Hadad escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen.

Meanwhile, the King of Israel [Ahab] advanced and overpowered the Arameans’ horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses.

9. What does the prophet advise in verse 22? Why?

The prophet advises Ahab to strengthen his army because Ben-Hadad will return in the following spring and attack Israel again!

Read 1 Kings 20:23-25

10. What explanation do the officials of the King of Aram offer him for the defeat?

The officials’ explanation is that Israel’s gods are ‘gods of the hills’ [god deities were often seen as localized – i.e., hills, valleys, water, sun] which is why the Israelites defeated the Arameans. So, they suggest, things will be different, if they fight the Israelites ‘on the plains’. They totally underestimated and limited God’s power! Their wrong theology dictated their advice.

Here they imagined that God could be molded into an image that they wanted or could relate to. “The art of god-making is very common among men. Instead of going to revelation to see what God is, and humbly believing in him as he reveals himself, men sit down and consider what sort of God he ought to be, and in so doing they are no wiser than the man who makes a god of mud or wood or stone” (Spurgeon).

Many today think that God is a God of hills but not of the plains. They think God is a God of the past but not of the present. They think God is a God of a few special favorites but not of all His people. They think that God is God of one kind of trial, but not of another kind. "Depend upon it, since Satan could not kill the church by roaring at her like a lion, he is now trying to crush her by hugging her like a bear. There is truth in this, but it is not all the truth. Do you really think, my brethren, that God cannot preserve his Church in the particular trial through which she is now passing? Is he the God of the hills of persecution, but not the God of the valleys of prosperity?" (Spurgeon).

"Will God aid a Whitfield and not help a poor local preacher holding forth upon the green? Will he assist the earnest minister who addresses thousands, and desert the simple girl who teaches a dozen little children the old, old story of the cross? Is this after the fashion of God, to patronize the eminent and neglect the lowly? Does Jesus despise the day of small things?" (Spurgeon)

11. What advice is given to the King of Aram in verses 24 & 25?

The official advice Ben-Hadad to a) remove each king and replace with a seasoned officer; b) raise an army equivalent in size and might to the army that deserted you earlier – horse for horse – chariot for chariot.

Read 1 Kings 20:26-34

12. What do the army of Ben-Hadad and the army of King Ahab do in verses 26 to 27?

Ben-Hadad's army mustered to fight Israel at Aphek. King Ahab's army also mustered to fight. The armies camped opposite each other. The Israelites army were like two small flocks of goats in comparison to the Aramean army which covered the whole countryside.

13. What does the man of God tell King Ahab in verse 28?

*The man of God (again unnamed) told King Ahab that the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of valleys and promises that God will deliver the Aramean's vast army into Ahab's hands, and then **"you will know that I am the Lord"***

14. How did the battle go in verses 29 to 30?

They camped opposite each other for 7 days and then on the 7th day the battle started. The Arameans suffered 130,000 casualties. The rest escaped to Aphek, only for a wall to collapse on 27,000 people! Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room.

15. What do the officials of Ben-Hadad advise in verse 31?

The officials have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful; so, they suggest going to the King of Israel [Ahab] with sackcloth [sign of grieve and mourning] around their waist and ropes around their heads [a sign of supplication] – and perhaps Ahab will spare their lives!

16. How does King Ahab treat Ben-Hadad in verses 32 to 34? Is this a good thing?

When Ben-Hadad's officials came to Ahab wearing sackcloth and ropes and pleaded "Your servant, Ben-Hadad says 'Please let me live'"; Ahab agreed to spare him and called Ben-Hadad, his brother! Ahab invited Ben-Hadad into his chariot. In return for his life being spared, Ben-Hadad offered to return any cities his father had taken from Ahab's father and offered that Ahab could set up market areas in Damascus.

So, Ahab makes a treaty with Ben-Hadad and sets him free.

Not such a good idea!

Ben-Hadad has been relentless in attacking Israel and he is not going to give up. See 1 Kings 22:31. We are meant to get the impression; this compromise is foolish rather than merciful and gracious.

Read 1 Kings 20:35-43

17. What plot does one of the company of prophets come up with in verses 35 to 38?

One of the company of prophets asked his companion to strike him with his weapon but he refused; so, the prophet said – because you have disobeyed the Lord – you will die at the hands of lion; which he did.

The prophet then asked another man to strike him, which he did and wounded him.

The prophet then stood by the road waiting for the king and disguised himself with a headband.

18. How does the prophet confront the King as he passes by?

When the King came by, the disguised prophet said that he had been in the thick of the battle when he was given a prisoner taken captive to guard. He was told to guard the prisoner with his life, but whilst he was 'busy here and there' the captive escaped.

The King said 'you've pronounced your own verdict' – in other words you should die.

19. What rebuke from God does the prophet give the King in verses 41 to 42?

The prophet then whipped off his disguise – and pronounced the Lord's judgment on Ahab "You have set a man free [Ben-Hadad] whom I had determined should die Therefore it is your life for his life your people for his people."

[This is a bit like when Nathan the prophet pronounced God's judgment on King David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12)]

The prophet's made-up story with the fictional excuse becomes real in the life of many, especially many ministers of the Gospel. "If a man is called to preach the Word, and becomes busy over a hundred things other than that of his central work, and so loses the opportunity to preach, his failure is complete. That which is our God-appointed work, we must do. If we fail in that, the fact that we have been 'busy here and there,' doing all sorts of other things, is of no avail" (Morgan).

Even as the fictional prisoner escaped, so many opportunities escape us in the Christian life. "I want you all to remember this morning that if any portion of life has not been spent in God's

service it is gone. Time past is gone. You can never have it back again, not even the last moment which just now glided by” (Spurgeon).

In the prophet’s story, he was unfaithful in guarding something that was entrusted to him. Ahab rightly judged that the prophet should be held responsible for his failure to guard what was entrusted to him; and so, must Ahab.

20. How does the King react?

Ahab is sullen and angry.

He was not repentant. He had the sorrow of being a sinner and knowing the consequences of sin, without having the sorrow for the sin itself.

21. **Ponder:** Some wonder if God was fair to King Ahab; what do you think? (cf. Deuteronomy 20:10-18; 1 Samuel 15:17-24)

In Deuteronomy 20:10-18 – there are detailed instructions on how Israel is to deal with the nations/tribes/cities that attack them. The reason being, is that these nations/tribes/cities are pagan and worship false gods. God wanted them wiped out to prevent them from corrupted His people; which of course over the centuries they failed to do.

In 1 Samuel 15:17-24 – Saul had been told to totally destroy the Amalekites but he spared Agag and the people took the spoils, sheep and oxen and best of things for sacrificing to the Lord. But that’s not what God told Saul/Israel to do. Therefore, was Saul rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord rejected Saul as King! Unlike Ahab, Saul did repent (v24).

This was God’s war and Ben-Hadad was God’s prisoner, not Ahab’s.

If Ahab had of been concerned about releasing God’s prophet and if Ahab could have been bothered, he could have asked God or His prophet, what he should do?

God has the right to judge; and that is the God of the Bible!

Read Mark 9:42-48

22. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 20:1-43?

Jesus warns us what might cause us to stumble and sin; and tells us to remove (cut it off) whatever causes us to sin; so that our continually sinning does not leads us to Hell. It’s much better for us to go to heaven crippled than to end up in hell!

Ahab wanted to please Ben-Hadad more than God; which was his problem all along. Ahab pleased himself before God, he pleased Jezebel before God, he worshipped Asherah and Baal before God. All these obstacles had to be removed from Ahab’s life! But he wasn’t prepared to do it. Even what he saw on Mount Carmel didn’t convince him! Even the way God had won a most unlikely and amazing victory against Ben-Hadad, he still didn’t come back to God!

23. **Ponder:** What could King Ahab have done differently in verse 43?

He could have repented instead of felling sorry for himself and angry.

Read Mark 1:14-15

24. How does this passage relate to 1 Kings 20:1-43?

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God. “The time has come; the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the Good News!”

For King Ahab, the Kingdom of God had come so near to him – through God’s Words given by Elijah, through Mount Carmel, through the prophet who told him of the pending victory, through the prophet who confronted him for sparing Ben-Hadad. But Ahab couldn’t bring himself to repent and believe.

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of 1 Kings 20:1-43

- *This passage shows us who the Lord is*
- *God’s grace in Jesus – requires us to repent and believe!*



If the Old Testament points to Jesus and **Scripture is all about Him** (Luke 24:27), in what ways does this passage point to Jesus, if at all?

God’s grace to Ahab is a picture of God’s grace to us – in Jesus!

How does this passage **apply to your life**?

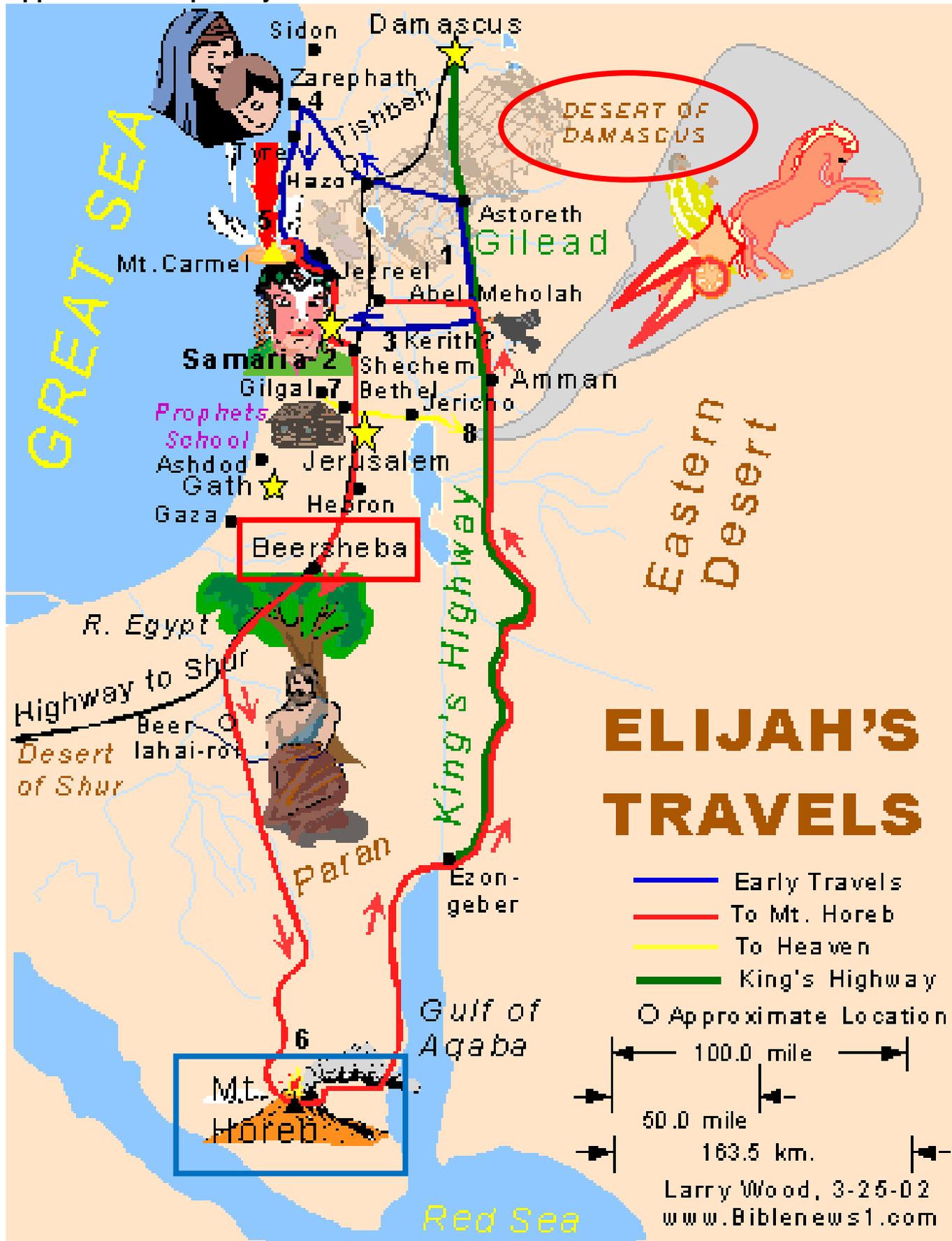
- a. *We have a picture of God’s grace here in God’s promise to Ahab of victory. But isn’t that what God’s grace is – undeserved favour. Isn’t that what God shows us in sending Jesus.*
- b. *Aren’t we a bit like Ahab and ask “By whom?” “who’s going to do it?” – but God often uses the people already amongst us, even ourselves!*
- c. *The prophet tells Ahab to prepare. There is always preparation needed for God’s work.*
- d. *God wins battles and no battle is TOO BIG for God!*
- e. *We may be guilty of reducing the Lord to being “only the god of the hills!”*
- f. *Just as the Arameans came to King Ahab for mercy – we should come to King Jesus grieving and mourning our sin and asking for mercy!*
- g. *We can get “busy, here and there” and fail to do the Lord’s work as He intends us to do!*
- h. *How faithful are we in what God has entrusted to us!*
- i. *Despite being shown “that you will know that I am the Lord” by the amazing victories – Ahab failed to carry out the Lord’s instructions and failed to repent. There must be a response to knowing “who the Lord is”.*
- j. *Be quick to repent!*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V13/V28 – both have the phrase “You will know that I am the Lord”

Finish in prayer: Ask God to grant us clear understanding of who He is. Ask God to help us to be quick to repent of any sinful behaviour in our lives. Ask God to help us be faithful servants of the Gospel who preach the Good News of Jesus, so that people repent and believe in Him.

Appendix 1 – Map of Elijah’s Travels



**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
September 2022**

Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

1 and 2 Kings (Donald J. Wiseman – Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)

1 Kings – The Wisdom and the Folly (Dale Ralph Davis)

Halley's Bible Handbook – New Revised Edition (Henry H. Halley)

Notes/Prayer Points