

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit. and Theology, Lecture 28

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology course, lecture number 28.

In the announcements for you today, as you can see...

So let's start by, like, singing. Isn't that, like, awesome? Or like, totally awesome? Just think one of these days I'll be a convert to some kind of speech. Let's sing our "Oseh Shalom," probably parts of this you don't remember terribly well because when we get to the chorus it does ramble all over the place, but let's see what we can do with this. You can let your voice wander around in the chorus and, chances are, you'll hit some of the notes right. They do some rather odd things. [singing]

At any rate, a lovely little Hebrew song that I hope if you go to synagogue at some point you will encounter. Also thinking a little bit ahead, on April 21st at Peabody High School is the holocaust memorial survivors service they always sing this one there. I'll probably say more about this a little later on but if that's something you can attend, I would encourage you to do so.

Obviously each year the number of survivors of the holocaust dwindles, and so this is a time really to honor them and be a part of remembering something that's just so horrifying in their minds, and yet they've survived. There's a really nice little contingent of survivors on the North Shore. Did any of you hear Sonya Weitz when she was on campus in the fall? She is probably the most articulate spokesperson of that wonderful community that's here.

Let's take some time to pray here as we start so we can get on with our work for today.

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, precious Redeemer, most Holy Spirit of truth, thank you so much for having revealed yourself to us and especially having revealed yourself in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. Father, we're thankful as we reach this Easter season that we can again draw our minds and hearts to the profound

depths of your love for us through Christ. So as we walk through these next days, help us to take the time and the devotion and the intentionality to remember again what it is meant for you to redeem us, to pay that price. Father I would pray for each of us as we travel this weekend to give travelling mercies and safety. That you would be pleased to use us as lights in the family contexts of which we might be going, and that indeed we would return safely as well. May this be a time of restoration for each one of us. Please, teach us this day through your word. We know that it has power, help us not to quench the power of your Spirit working in our hearts and lives. So we would ask all these things boldly in the name of Christ our savior. Amen.

Well we are moving on, we started doing history again last time after our wisdom literature foray, and we made it from the division to the kingdom right up to the time of Elijah—you may remember that was the first 75 years of what we call the divided kingdom. Just to review a little bit, how many different dynasties do I want you to know in the Northern Kingdom? Yes, four, right. We talked about the first three, what were they? You can sneak a preview, no, a review if you look at your notes. Who started the first dynasty in the Northern Kingdom? Starts with “J”... Jeroboam son of Nebat. Following him was... that starts with “B”....Anybody remember? Anybody got notes? I’m going to put the chart up here in a moment but I just want to see where we are. Yes, Baasha. Good. And then the third one, Omri, splendid. Okay, that was the divided kingdom and the Northern Kingdom.

Here’s the chart that we’re looking at. We made our way last time through Jeroboam, the Baasha dynasty, and we got Omri sort of on the table with his son Ahab. And of course, Ahab and Jezebel are unfortunately best known for importing Baal worship as the state religion. This is the context in which Elijah is called to minister. Particularly we have the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel. That’s kind of where we left off last time.

Let me tell you where we’re going today. We’re going to focus on Northern Kingdom today. If you’re thinking to yourself, what happened to all these guys? We’re

getting there, Lord willing, a week from today, when we come back from Easter vacation, we'll pick up with the Southern Kingdom and take care of those plus a few more.

Our purposes today are to start with Ahab again, because there are a couple of instances that are very important in terms of Ahab. We'll go very quickly from Ahab down to Jehu which will be significant, then we'll skip down to Jeroboam II. He's not called the second of course, in Scripture, but he's the second one to come along, after Jeroboam son of Nebat. And then finally a whole battery of kings that didn't last very long; 2 Kings chapter 15, if you've read it for today, you're aware of the horrors of the end of the Northern Kingdom, things are a mess. And there seems to be civil strife and factionalism from this area and that area. It's terrible. We have the fall of the North. We also want to focus just a little bit on the context the first of the writing prophets, Hosea, Amos, and Jonah. And today as we talk about some of the international rulers that were significant in this time, we're going to lay the foundation for understanding something about Jonah in particular. And we're going to be approaching Jonah in about a week and a half. So that's kind of where we're going for today.

Let's do a little bit with our major international powers. Again, I'm trying to give some background in which to insert these texts that you're reading, particularly in 2 Kings and Chronicles as well. Assyria first of all, some names we're already familiar, most notably Shalmaneser III. Your reading in *Old Testament Parallels* the material from Shalmaneser III, which mentions the house of Omri, mentions Ahab, and then also there is a very interesting little standing stone. Now you know those things are called stels, a standing stone that indicates Jehu who comes to pay tribute to Shalmaneser. Again, you've read that in *Old Testament Parallels*. Kind of moving on a little bit, we also have Tiglath-pileser III (TP3)—if you're not real happy about writing all that out, there's two ways to deal with it. The same thing the biblical text did—they occasionally call him Pul—that's Tiglath-pileser III or you could just write TP3. The biblical text doesn't do that, but it's a short way of talking about TP3.

Then right at the end of the Northern Kingdom, right around the time of 722, when the Northern Kingdom was going to fall, we have these two names Shalmaneser V and

Sargon II. Both are important figures, both of them show up, as well as TP3, in the biblical text as well. Now, Assyria is a looming power during these centuries. Starting in the ninth century, it's on the rise, and particularly in the eighth century they'll be particularly powerful as they wipe out the Northern Kingdom. First of all as they make the Northern Kingdom totally subservient to them, but then also to take them captive.

To give you a little bit of a flavor of what the Assyrians were like, I've actually chosen to read you a little excerpt from a monument that was set up by Ashurnasirpal II. Now he's going to precede Shalmaneser III, but just hang on to this—if you want exact dates it's 883 to 859, for whatever that's worth. But I'm reading this to you because this will give you a sense, I hope, of the terror that the prospect of Assyria and Assyrian control might have had for Israelites. They did not have a very nice reputation. This might explain possibly why someone like Jonah, who was told—and we're going to study him in about a week in a half “Go to Nineveh and prophesy.” Maybe once we have this in our minds we can understand why Jonah hightailed it in the other direction and went west instead of east. Just listen: this is Ashurnasirpal II bragging. By the way what does it mean to flay someone? Anybody know? [answer from class] It's not exactly a nice thing...it's actually to slice their skin off. It's pretty ugly stuff. “I've flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins. Some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, others I rounded on stakes about the pillar.” This is his monument for all the things he's bragging about doing, right? “Many within the border of my own land I flayed.” In other words, not only the enemies out there, but the people who were revolting against him. “I spread their skins on the walls, and I cut off the limbs of the officers who had rebelled.” Not exactly happy stuff, and just a tiny little slice—oh that's a bad pun if we're talking about flaying—sorry. Just gives you a little bit of a picture in terms of why it would be that Israel, and particularly a prophet from Israel named Jonah, would not be really excited to offer any kind of message of the Lord to these people. And of course, when we do Jonah we'll understand even more because their nature is pretty significant.

A couple of little things we just want to remind ourselves of; we still have, want to keep on our radar screen the name Benhadad (because you're reading about him as well) and then Ben Hadad gets assassinated by a guy named Hazael. And if you've read your *Old Testament Parallels*, another very important text that was discovered just in 1992, by the way, at Dan; we know now that Dan is up in the northern part of the country because we've done our history and our geography and we've seen it up there—when the excavator of Tel Dan was working up there—in the late afternoon, by the way, the sun was shining just the right way, they were about to close down the excavation for the day, and a woman who was on the site (and if I remember correctly, she was doing some photography there) she happened to notice, because the shadows were casting their things just right, that there was a rock, a stone, that had an inscription on it. And actually in the succeeding year—not just in 1992 but in 1993—they found some pieces of this inscription and what it has on it are, or I should say is, basically, a bragging on the part of Hazael, ostensibly, as to what he had done to the house of David and Israel. Now, there's a lot in terms of why that's important, read your *Old Testament Parallels* to get a sense of that.

Anyway, this little bit of a footnote, for those of you going into Biblical Studies, or who are interested in this kind of thing: there's a whole school of thought that say “well there really wasn't a Davidic dynasty.” Have I talked about this already? I think I have when I talked about some of the monumental buildings in Jerusalem from the time of David. At any rate, whole school of thought, called minimalists, who say “there really wasn't a house of David, there really wasn't a Davidic dynasty, there really wasn't a King David or a King Solomon who were of any consequence whatsoever. All that history is made up several centuries later to give Israel a little bit of a history.”

Well what's fascinating is that the Tel Dan inscription dates to the 9th century, and it refers to “house of David,” and this guy Hazael, from Syria, bragging about the fact that he's wiped out the house of David and the King of Israel. Now, just a little bit of closure to that discussion—you don't have to take notes on this part of it by the way, this is for your own help for when you're reading bits and pieces of religious critics and they

always come out and they're always debunking the historicity of the Bible. This inscription is very helpful for us. The opponents say "Well it's just a forgery." Don't take that—it doesn't work. One of the best epigraphers in the world, named Anson Rainey, he says that's nonsense. At any rate, Tell Dan inscription, very helpful, but I need to tell you as well that Egypt is still on the scene. Not as powerful—it is Assyria and Syria who are making life difficult during this time. But there always is Egypt down there. Of course, Egypt is going to be one of the places to which the Assyria aspires, because they want to control the bread basket of the Middle East.

There's Jehu paying homage to Shalmaneser. Here's our Tel Dan inscription. Okay? Here you've got the "bet David," right in there—right there. Okay, and nicely close up highlighted, for us to see it. Very helpful, again, this is in paleo-Hebrew, for those who might study Hebrew, this is not the Hebrew letters that we see in the Hebrew Bible today, this is an older form. It reads from right to left so here are the first three letters: bet dvd, basically, and that's not a DVD, it's David. Now, there are other ways that people try to read this, but just take my word for it, or come and take a class in Biblical Hermeneutics, where we discuss this stuff at further length.

Okay we need to move on. You always have to have a map on these things. This is just to give us a little sense in terms of the superpower of the day and what they were aspiring to. Here's Assyria, under Shalmaneser III, about whom we've just talked, because he's the one who had Jehu paying tribute to him. Notice that at that point Samaria is still out of their control. Samaria is down here, Shalmaneser III's getting to that point but he's extending his tentacles. By the time we get to TP 3, It's all under their control. And even Jerusalem is going to be paying tribute; they haven't fallen yet, but they're going to be paying tribute. And then finally, once we get to a later person Esserhaddon and the control goes all the way down here as well.

Well, one word about the South, and then as I said we're going to spend the rest of our time on the Northern Kingdom today, and then we'll catch up on the South. But we do have to talk about Jehoshaphat, because he's an interesting guy. He's a good person, a good king, one of his major issues, is to send people out to teach the Torah. He sends

Levites out, he sends priests out. He's teaching the Torah through all the land and getting rid of the garbage that's in there. But he does something that's a little bit foolish. He makes an alliance with the Northern king. That's why we're talking about him today, because there's going to be this political bonding between the two of them. One of the things he's going to do is marry off his son to a woman to the north named Athaliah, which is going to set the stage for some really ugly events that we're going to look at a week from today, so that was mistake number one. He's probably doing it because, on the surface, the Northern Kingdom looks more powerful; it's bigger, it's more powerful, they've got a lot going for them, they have a lot of interaction with Phoenicia. They've imported all this stuff—the Northern kingdom looks good. Remember we come back to that over and over again. People are falling for what looks good, looks cosmopolitan, and looks like it's going to advance them somehow. And that's probably one of the reasons for Jehoshaphat's alliance with the north and with Ahab at this point.

But at any rate, as I said, the good things are his reforms, removes the high places, the Asherah poles, and sends out teachers of Torah. Very important stuff going on. Can't in any way minimize the importance of that. He also appoints Judges. Just a little note, I've said repeatedly how important names are, Jehoshaphat's name means "The Lord judged." Bound into this name are some of the things that, interestingly enough, he ends up doing, for which the scriptures certainly affirms him. 1 Chronicles develops the Jehoshaphat seeing a little bit more as you can see, even by including these references. It's a good time of the Southern Kingdom. It's a time of prosperity; it's a time of relative peace. However, 2 Chronicles 19 indicates to us that his alliance with the north was not something the Lord was pleased with. And we can understand the way the North is awash in Baal worship. I need to say this again, I know I've said it already. Ahab and Jezebel had imported Baal worship as the state religion. So what on earth was Jehoshaphat doing making alliances with them? And yet he does.

Now we're going to move up North, and spend the rest of our time up North. We have Ahab, and we've already discovered that he is a fundamentally evil person. We're going to look at three incidents that give us little windows into Ahab's life in different

ways. The first is an international kind of a thing. 1 Kings chapter 20 tells us that he's pretty successful, at least at this particular point in time. Ahab defeats Benhadad, king of Syria. At any rate, in the general type of rules of war, he should have done away with Benhadad. Instead, he lets him go free. And God sends a prophetic voice to warn him, the prophet acts out a little parable about being wounded and so forth and tells the king as he's walking by "well this is what happened to me because I lost track of somebody I was supposed to keep guard on." And then of course the king is angry, and the prophet says "that's you. You didn't handle Benhadad the way you should have. At any rate there's a constant warfare there, but I just want you to kind of highlight that in your minds, even though Ahab is this wicked, and we've seen already how he entirely displeased the Lord, even so, God continued to send prophets to him. He had sent Elijah, now he's sending these anonymous prophets. There's a constant reaching out to try and grab hold of Ahab.

In his own private life, if there's such a thing, we also see some very ugly things here, because he has rather of a fit when he can't get Naboth's vineyard. Perhaps you know that story which happens to be 1 Kings 21. He turns his face to the wall, it says he's solemn and angry. This guy's a petulant, spoiled man, basically. Jezebel to the rescue, what does she do? This is really insidiously evil. What does Jezebel do so that Naboth can have Naboth's prize vineyard? Chris did you have your hand up? Yes, she has him killed, but do you notice how she does it? It's really nasty; she says proclaim a fast, set up a really religious looking kind of a thing, then has two people accuse him of having cursed God. I mean, this is nasty stuff; she's using Torah in the most awful of ways to bring about the death of Naboth, bringing about the death of Naboth just so Ahab can have his vineyard. Of course, this all happens because then there is a prophecy made in this regard and it's a striking one. Elijah says to him, verse 21: "I'm going to bring disaster on you. I'll make your house like Jeroboam son of Nebat. Dogs are going to devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who will die in the city and birds will feed on those who die in the country." As shameful as possible. Those of you who wrote your Proverbs paper on that Proverb that says "the one who mocks his father, his eyes will be plucked out by the birds of the air." This is as shameful

as you can imagine, because there's not a burial being given to this person. So also in this case; no honor there.

Then also in verse 25 "there was never a man like Nahab who sold himself as evil to the eyes of the Lord, who was urged on by his wife Jezebel. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols." Talk about a nasty epitaph. That's one right there.

Well, then finally, the third little vignette we're going to look at. There's other stuff too, but these are the three we want to focus on. Is indeed this alliance with Jehoshaphat. And I want to spend just a little bit of time with this. What's going on? Who's the enemy right now? Who are they allied against? What's the logical answer? Syria, right? They're allied against Syria. Not surprising, there's been this ongoing conflict back and forth, chapter 20 and so on, now Jehoshaphat has been persuaded to go fight along with Ahab. Where are they fighting? They're going to go and fight eventually at Ramoth Gilead. Remember it's that hub point always? That's going to be a source of conflict right up through our Jehu narrative, At this point they're right up at the city gate.

What happens? Who's Micaiah? Take a guess—he's a prophet, right? He's uttering a prophecy. Here's the way the narrative goes—Jehoshaphat says "shouldn't we consult a prophet about whether or not we should go?" And the court prophets are saying "sure go ahead, you're going to fight, you're going to win, you're going to beat any of those Syrians out there." And Jehoshaphat pushes and says "what about a prophet of the Lord?" And then what does Ahab say? "Oh, there's one of those around, but he never says anything about me that I like, I hate him." But Jehoshaphat's prodding a little bit, so they bring Micaiah. The messengers who go to get him say, "here's what the prophets have been saying (subtext: you better say the same thing).

Micaiah says I can only speak for the Lord. But he comes into Ahab's presence and what does he say? First of all, he says exactly what the earlier prophets had said, mimicking them: "go and be successful!" But something about his tone is a dead giveaway that that's not the truth. Because Ahab says "I adjure you to speak the truth to me." And then what does Micaiah say? Read the text: it's rather strong. Verse 17 of chapter 22, I Kings, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd."

That means they don't have their king any longer (shepherd being a figure for the king). This is what Ahab is going to encounter--he's going to die!

But let's keep going. The king of Israel, that's Ahab, says "didn't I tell you he never prophesies anything good about me? But Micaiah goes on: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and left. And the Lord said 'who will lure Ahab to go unto Ramoth Gilead and go unto his death there?' One suggests this and the other suggested that, and finally the spirit," I know your NIV says a spirit, but there's a definite article in there. "Finally the spirit stood before the Lord and said 'I will lure him, I'll be a lying spirit in the mouths of all the prophets,' 'you will succeed,' the Lord says, 'go do it.' So now the Lord has put a lying spirit in all the mouths of the prophets. The Lord has decreed disaster for you." And now you're just sitting there thinking "oh that's boring." Think of what's going on. Micaiah has seen a vision into heaven here, first of all. And there's this interaction in heaven and it's involving some deceit! There's a spirit going out that God is giving permission to lie. And be a lying spirit in the mouths of all the prophets because you notice what happens, even though Micaiah tells this to Ahab, what does he do?

I mean, Ahab's response is absolutely fascinating. What does he do? It means he's kind of taking seriously the message, but not really. This also attests to the possible gullibility of Jehoshaphat. Do they go to battle? How many say, yes? They go to battle don't they? Even though the message has been Ahab is going to die in the battle of Ramoth Gilead, they still go! But to what extent can we see the maybe Ahab has sort of been bothered by this message? What does he do? Matt. Yeah, he goes in disguise, thinking, "I'm going to trick the Lord, no problem, I can get by with this, I can fake it."

Then the other side of it is he tells Jehoshaphat "you dress up in the royal robes. You be the person that everybody's going to try and get." And it works initially. Because the Assyrians have been told only go after the King of Israel, and they think Jehoshaphat's that, until he manages to persuade them he's not the King of Israel. Possibly Jehoshaphat has to do this because he's the lesser of the two in the alliance. He has to do what Ahab tells him to do. Isn't it fascinating that he takes this message

seriously and also who doesn't? And as a result, random shot from an archer, he loses his life there, and is going to die in a pool of blood. This is wonderful reading if you can take off your stained glass windows and recognize there are some really incredible things going on here both in terms of human deceptions and human plans and human conniving, and also God's sovereignty over ruling all of it in the process. At any rate, that's our Ahab instance here.

Just to give you a little bit of a sense what city gates look like: This is the one at Dan, by the way. An Israelite period city gate. Here's what the archaeologists found: one of our teachers, standing there. Here is the area right there would be the platform where probably the throne of a king or somebody sitting would be established and people would come then and bring their petitions to this person. Because they found the base of this column (that's a natural one) they've actually reconstructed the scene of what might have been at the city gate. Column bases, pillars that would hold up a canopy things could be a little warmish, the person sitting right under here, petitioners walking around this whole cobblestone area. Right over there you see little bits of a bench where others might have been sitting as well. To make a tiny connection to you, right behind this, if you're sitting facing the gate (as you are) on the other side of the plaza, which is right here, is the room where the Tel Dan inscription was found. It was found in this city gate area in Dan.

We need to keep moving along to Elisha. Elisha's a bright light in some of this very dreadful event that's happening in the Northern Kingdom. Elisha gets a double portion of Elijah's spirit. I'm not going to read for you all of chapter 2 of 2 Kings, but if you haven't read it yet, when you read it, do it with your antennas up in terms of this is an amazing piece of stylized, structured literature because as you read it you see certain expressions repeated, and then repeated, and then repeated, as Elijah and Elisha move slowly out of Israel towards the Jordan River. And their interaction with the prophets and with each other are always the same, of the same language, because we're going somewhere with Elijah and Elisha and Elijah knows something pretty incredible is going to happen but he doesn't know what.

They cross the Jordan River—how do they cross the Jordan River? It splits, doesn't it? Then what happens on the other side? In chapter two—the water is divided in chapter 2 verse 8, they cross over on dry ground—I hope you have some echoes of others things where they cross over on dry ground, both the Exodus and also crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Then Elisha says “let me inherit a double portion of your spirit” and then Elijah says “if you see me when I'm taken, this will indeed happen. As they were walking along and talking together a chariot of fire and horses of fire came down and separated the two of them. Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.”

Then he gets the double portion of the spirit. Goes back, to the bank of the Jordan, crosses over, and we have some very interesting miracles in the next four chapters. I'm not going to go into them at length, but I want you to notice something. Usually Elijah is the one who gets the major press as we're talking about these two prophets. But as you look at the miracles recorded in the scriptures, Elisha is the one who has a whole bunch of miracles that actually are more in number and quantity. Qualitative kinds of things. Both of these persons doing miracles do indeed look forward as well to the kinds of things that Jesus does. By the way, if you're having trouble keeping Elijah and Elisha straight—which is always a problem—just remember, “j” comes before “sh” in the alphabet.” “J” is the one who was living first, Elisha will inherit from Elijah. Well, he's going to provide food, he's going to provide water, he feeds a hundred people barley bread. That's going to kind of lead our minds to John chapter 6 isn't it? When Jesus is feeding 5000 people. He raises a dead person, Elijah had done that, Elisha does as well. You may remember the narrative, just put Shunam up here. This woman and her husband, who had made a place for Elisha to stay as he's passing back and forth. He wants to repay him in some way. So he asks “what can I do for you?” The long and the short of it is: he prays that they have a son and they have a son but what happens is the son dies. And Elisha will come from Mount Carmel cross the Jezreel valley and raise that son from the dead.

What happens in Luke chapter 7? Does anybody know? You can look this up later: Jesus comes to a little town called Nain—I'm going to show you a map in a moment so I

can show you how profoundly important this is in terms of geography. Jesus comes to a little town called Nain, and there is a woman there whose son has just died. She happens to have been a widow. Jesus goes up and touches the bier, coming in contact with uncleanness, in case you hadn't gathered that, and the son is raised from the dead. He sits up, and he's alive. And what do the people say? "Oh my stars and garters, there's a prophet among us!" That's one of my grandmother's expressions, and I thought I'd wake you up a little bit. They say, "there's a prophet here!" Why are they saying that? Because right around the corner, some 800 years ago, the same thing had happened, when Elisha raised someone from the dead. Notice these are things that Jesus would do.

Elisha heals Naaman. What's Naaman's problem? He's got leprosy doesn't he? He comes from afar, from Syria. He's enemy, don't you get that? He's a general from the enemy army. A little slave girl who had been captured and was living in his house was the one who said "you really ought to do something about this—why don't you go and find someone in Israel who will help you?" Talk about being a witness in a dark area. There she is. Naaman's healed of his leprosy. Jesus heals people of their leprosy as well, in great numbers.

And then we do have this instance where Elisha has some knowledge to outwit the enemies. In fact, it gets to the point that the King of Syria says "who's the person that is traitoring? Who's giving away the information? Who's telling all my movements?" and the people know that it's Elisha. Alright.

At any rate, one of the last things that he does is indirect, and we just want to turn ahead to chapter 9 of 2 Kings. The prophet Elisha summoned a man from the company of the prophets. This later guy is going to be anonymous, but he's being commanded by Elisha—commissioned, I should say. "Tuck your cloak in your belt, take this flask of oil with you and go to" of course it's Ramoth Gilead. That's where all the battles are and Jehu is an army general. "When you get there look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi. Look for him, get away from him, get him away from his companions. Then take the flask, pour oil on his head, and declare 'I anoint you King over Israel.'" Then open the door and run. Because his life would be possibly in danger. Now, that's Elisha's

commission to the unnamed prophet. The unnamed prophet says something else as well. Notice: when Jehu goes into the house with him, out of hearing of everybody else (I'm now in verse 6), the prophet says "In keeping with what Elisha said, I anoint you over the people of Israel, now in verse 7 and the following. "You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master. I'll avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the Lord's servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish." And then verse 9, "I'll make the house of Ahab like the house of Jericho son of Nebat." Verse 10: "As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her at the plot of ground at Jezreel and no one will bury her." Remember Elijah talked about that? So we've got kind of this prophetic continuity here in terms of what's going to happen. That's Elijah's, not his final act, but the last one we'll look at.

Just getting a little bit of geographical context for the story. I mentioned to you a moment ago—here's Shunam, and again if you're remembering, here's our Jezreel Valley, a major battle ground. We've talked about this already. Here's Shunam. Right around the hill there's Nain. Hard to see it in its white print. Shunam, Nain. Probably a grand total of maybe 2.5-3 miles distance. Maybe a bit more if you have to go around the mountain. That gives us some sort of a sense in terms of why the people would say "there's a prophet here. Jesus has raised this young man from the dead."

Another thing to keep in mind in terms of our Jehu anointing, Ramoth Gilead is right up here. Here's Jezreel where they're all staying, and so as Jehu—and that's the narrative we're going to look at in just a moment—is anointed here at Ramoth Gilead. He is going to start riding his chariot right on down there and up the valley. And they see him coming. What does Jehu drive like? You need to know this, it's absolutely essential. What's Jehu's driving like? A madman. They know him coming from a long distance because "he drives like a madman." So if you ever want to insult somebody's driving when they're going through Boston, just tell them they drive like Jehu. Probably it'll be totally lost on them, but oh well.

Chapters 9 and 10 do indeed talk to us about this prophecy as I just said and then Jehu's anointing and coming, if you really want to see the madman part of this whole

thing. Yes here we are. Chapter 9 verse 20 “the lookout reported: the driving is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi, he drives like a madman.”

Alright. As he comes back, Jehu not only takes care of Jezebel—in fact that’s a rather gruesome kind of thing—Jezebel’s looking out the window, sees him coming, and he says “who up there is going to” basically be on my side. And so some of the people simply pitch her over the parapet. She falls down, as Jehu says throw her down, some of her blood splattered the walls, the horses trampled her underfoot. Then Jehu because he’s such a kind and sensitive and loving soul says “went in and ate his dinner?” Then he says “take care of that woman,” but when they come out all they find is her hands and feet and skull. Really gruesome, gruesome picture here. By the way, in the meantime he’s killed the king of the North as well. Jezebel, the queen mother, he wipes her off—what else does he do? He completely obliterates the house of the dynasty of Omri. What else does he do? He’s got rid of the king, Ahab’s son, and got rid of Jezebel. “There were in Samaria 70 sons of the house of Ahab, so Jehu wrote letters to Samaria and he says basically, choose the best and most worthy of your masters’ sons and set him on the throne, and then fight for your master’s house. But they’re so scared—and it lists them: house administrator, city governor, elders, and the guardians—they say “we aren’t going to do anything you tell us to do.” They’re sort of spineless types; they have no backbone. So Jehu writes a second letter: “If you’re on my side, take the heads of your masters’ sons, and come to me in Jezreel by this time tomorrow.” So what do they do? They behead all the sons, they stick them in baskets, they haul them and stash them at the city gates. And in that way Jehu has gotten rid of all of the dynasty of Ahab. The king, the queen mother, and all 70 sons are now gone.

That’s not the only thing he does. He gets rid of the prophets of Baal. But how does he do it? Is it upfront? Forthright? Yes, he kind of tricks them. What does he say in this kind of tricking them? “We’re going to have the celebration of celebrations for Baal. Please come it’s just going to be the best Baal worship thing you’ve ever experienced.” Right? And of course, the text says, in Verse 19, “but Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the ministers of Baal.” He says to his sidekicks, “look around, see that no

servants of the Lord are with you,” and then he posts people outside and sends the rest in and says “go in and kill them and don’t let anybody escape.” So that’s the end of the worship of Baal.

Verse 28. Jehu destroyed Baal worship—but here’s the problem, he didn’t turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the worship of the golden calves. And so the last jury on Jehu is, as the text says, “Jehu was not careful to keep the law of the Lord with all his heart.” As a result, Hazael begins to overpower Israelites, and starts to take off bits and pieces of the Northern Kingdom. So that’s Jehu.

There’s a little bit more we need to do. He have to get, now, through the Jehu dynasty to the demise of the Northern Kingdom. To do this we’re going to skip first to chapter 14—just to remind you we’re going to pick up that Southern Kingdom in the interval a week from today. Jeroboam II, again “II” in your own quotation marks. I’m in chapter 14 of 2 Kings, and I want to simply read for you verses 23-25, because it’s kind of helpful. “In the fifteenth year of king of king of Judah, Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, reigns 41 years, becomes king in Samaria, reigns 41 years.” Now sometimes we’re weary when we have 8 years of a presidency. This is 41 years, think about it. “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” But, notice verse 25: after that moral judgment on him, he’s an evildoer, verse 25 says “he’s the one who restored the boundaries of Israel. From the Lebo Hamath, [which is way up north], to the Sea of the Arabah [the Dead Sea] in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken through his servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-Hepher.” Is that ringing any canonical bells for you? When we read our prophet Jonah in about a week and a half, we’re going to discover he’s the son of Amittai. This is probably the same Jonah—not everybody is going to agree on this but I think “son of” is the thing that probably convinces us. And so we’ve got Jonah, then, prophesying in this particular point in time, and he has said something about the restoration of this, something that doesn’t show up in our written prophecy of Jonah. “In accordance with the Lord, the God of Israel.”

So we got some interesting things going on under Jeroboam II. It’s a very prosperous time. Again, it looks very good on the surface, and yet, there’s all sorts of evil

going on. Hosea and Amos will also be prophesying during this time, and both of them don't have very nice things to say about Jeroboam. When we talk about Amos particularly we're going to have some interesting connections to be made between Jeroboam son of Nebat (i.e. Jeroboam I) and Jeroboam II. Amos is a parallel to the unnamed prophet from Judah. But hang onto that, it's coming.

Alright. Somewhere here we have...yes. If you read 2 Kings chapter 15, you're going to get a sense of how desperate things had become in the Northern Kingdom. Probably what's going on here is that—and I said this at the beginning of the class—the Northern Kingdom itself is fractured, and so all these persons that are listed, Azariah, Zechariah, Shallum, Menachem king of Israel, right on through Pekahiah, Pekah. All of these guys are probably not reigning over the whole kingdom. It's probably sectioned. It's probably divided into different parts of it, but it is a time of just utter, utter decay for lots of reasons.

The alliance with Syria that I've got second there is something we're going to pick up on next time, because I'll just make a quick note of it here, there will be, during this whole last set of kings here, a point in time when the Northern Kingdom wants to ban together with Syria. They do it, and that's going to cause Judah to appeal to Assyria. Am I making sense with that? In other words, little Judah is appealing to the superpower Assyria. That whole interesting geopolitical bedfellows is going to be the staging ground for a fascinating prophecy in the book of Isaiah, but we're going to come to that later. At any rate, TP3 will invade the north and read all about it in *Old Testament Parallels*. In chapter 17 of 2 Kings, we have a very sobering statement, and I'm going to read most of it for you, because it gives us a sense in terms of what's happening. Chapter 17 verse 3, first of all, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria came up to attack Hoshea. He'd been Shalmaneser's vassal. But now the pinchers are coming in, alright? King of Assyria discovered Hosea was a traitor, therefore Shalmaneser seized him. So these are the bigger political things under which little Israel is trying to survive. The finally, verse 7 with our statement of condemnation. "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God" I'm going to keep reading and don't just let it sort of go somewhere

past your head, let it sink in in terms of the depth of what it is they've been doing, "They worshipped others gods, they followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them.... The Israelites (verse 9) secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right. They built high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every setting tree. At every high place they burned incense, they did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshipped idols, though the Lord said, 'You shouldn't do this.'" God warned Israel and Judah through his prophets and his seers. Over and over again, as we've seen. But they wouldn't listen; they were stiff-necked as their fathers who did not accept the Lord their God. They rejected his decrees, they rejected the covenant.

Now verse 16, I'm skipping a little bit. "They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, they worshipped Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger. And so the Lord was very angry and removed them from his presence."

Now, I know listening to that recital you're just saying "well that's a little dull, because you just said these things about three times over." The scriptures are saying this emphatically to tell us how detestable this whole thing is in God's sight. Every kind of idolatry they could have possibly engaged in, they did. Sort of a reprise from the book of Judges, isn't it? Here we saw them getting deeper and deeper and deeper into sin. And of course, don't think for a moment that this is a foreign situation to us. There are all sorts of ways that we can see our own contexts digging ourselves deeper and deeper and deeper into stuff that the nations roundabout were doing. And we fall that way too. What is tragedy, the tragic aspect about this for Israel's history, is what follows next.

The king of Assyria has a policy—it's an interesting one—it's going to be one that the Persian empire later on is going to rescind, but at any rate, the Assyrians, in order to tear apart any sense of identity. They took people out of their land, and that's what my little set of arrows is all about there. National entities found their identity in their

relationship with the land. We don't even understand that today because we're such a mobile culture: everybody's moving everywhere all the time. But if you were to go to other parts of the world, where people really are tied into their land and their cultural heritages that are bound up with the land, we might understand it a little better. That was true back then as well. So, as the Assyrians come along, they think "we can pretty much ruin this people's sense of identity by just ripping them out of the land, taking them away, resettling them somewhere else, and then ruin the identity of those people over there by repositioning them into what was the kingdom of Israel. So it's a whole movement of populations to ruin the identity and the national sense of who they were.

The other thing that figures into this—and as you read the rest of chapter 17 it becomes very clear—not only is land and identity a big deal, but those people's gods were also perceived as being local, in other words, part of their identity in a given place, in a given land. That's the background for what we have going on in the second half of chapter 17. Why did they import priests of Yahweh? Well, let me read for you. The king of Assyria verse 24 had brought all these people and resettled them—for all the reasons I've just tried to articulate for you. Verse 25: "When they first lived there, they didn't worship the Lord, so he sent lions among them and they killed some of the people." When this gets reported to the king of Assyria what does he say? "Ah, well, it's because they don't know how to worship that God that belongs to that country. Let's send some priests back and teach them." So he's got a sense that the God that was identified with Israel was locally there as well, and all they needed to do was to send some priests back, teach them how that particular God wanted to do things in that particular area, and everything would be hunky dory and just fine. What's the problem? There are actually two problems: they send priests to teach about Yahweh, but you know, part of that teaching was probably the perverted worship that was going on in the Northern Kingdom anyway, which, if you remember correctly, wasn't quite right. Golden calves, "these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt," wrong festival time, and priests not functioning in the tabernacle, so there's some real twisting of that Yahweh worship, but what else is happening?

Well, verse 32 says “they worshipped the Lord but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests. They worshipped the Lord but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought. You’ve got a real mess there. And the perfect term for it: syncretism. A little word that you’ll want to have to find—and with this we’ll stop. It means the mixing together of religious beliefs and practices. That’s a very simplistic definition, but it’ll serve for our purposes. The mixing together of a variety of religious, sometimes philosophical, beliefs and practices. Therefore, in the Northern Kingdom, you have this recognition of Yahweh worship, but also a continued practice of all these other things. This sets the stage for something that shows up in the New Testament which is the Samaritan issue. Perhaps when you took New Testament you went through all the background for Samaritans. 2 Kings 17 is when it all kind of gets going.

Now, what an interesting way to stop our sessions. Have a wonderful Easter. Did you know that Easter is an illustration of syncretism as well? That’s not a very nice note to leave it on. Ignore the Easter eggs and all that, and the Easter bunny—think of the resurrection.

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