

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Kings, Lecture 10

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Prophet out of Judah, Ahijah's Warning, Baasha's Dynasty, Omri & Ahab

Review – Prophet out of Judah – 1 Kings 13

We were in 1 Kings 13. We looked at that chapter where the Man of God out of Judah comes out to the north to Bethel and prophesies against the altar of Jeroboam, and among other things gives a long-term prophesy that a king called Josiah will eventually burn the bones of those false prophets and priests on that altar. And then there were some short-term predictions that were fulfilled as well that authenticated the longer-term prediction. Let's go onto "D," "Ahijah's Warning, 1 Kings 14:1-20."

Alright, the question has to do with what we touched on last time. The question is: This man of God out of Judah is deceived by the old prophet in the Northern Kingdom, and how do we explain what's going on there? It seems to me that the old prophet in the North was a true prophet. He heard about what this man of God out of Judah had done about confronting Jeroboam at that altar. I think he was sympathetic to what he had done. And it seems that he desired to have some fellowship with this man, this godly man from the south. He was probably isolated and didn't have much contact with other believing faithful there. In order to do that, he lies. Seems to me out of self-interest. Now of course, when he lied, he wasn't performing the function of a true prophet. That's why I prefer to speak of prophesy as a function rather than an office. It seems to me prophesy is when the Lord puts his word in the mouth of some individual so that the words he speaks are God's words. But that doesn't mean that every time they open their mouths they are performing the function of prophet. This old man, even though he had done that and was known as prophet, in this particular instance he sins, and he did something he obviously should not have done.

Now the man of God out of Judah, on the other hand, had been given a direct word from the Lord that he was not to go back the same way, was not to eat bread or drink water with anyone there, but he listened to this old man when he said he had a revelation.

He listened to the old prophet even though it contradicted the previous revelation he had received. He should not have listened to him because God does not contradict himself. God would not say one thing to the one person and something else to the other one. So I think both these men were at fault.

Now, the man of God out of Judah that disobeyed God's word then was judged for it. Then the old prophet performs the function of a true prophet when he says, "This is what's going to happen to you: you're not going to rest with your fathers." And he was attacked and killed by the lion. So at that point he's again performing the function of a true prophet. But when he lied to him, it was certainly a very wicked thing that he did. It was a sinful act. You can be a true prophet yet not be a good man. Usually a prophet is a godly person, but you can be a true prophet and a bad man. This fellow illustrates that. Balaam was a heathen soothsayer, yet he was a true prophet because the Lord put his words in his mouth. He wanted to curse Israel but couldn't; instead he blessed Israel. I think cases like that are exceptions, but I think it's important you realize the distinction that a prophet is not always a prophet in everything that he says. He can misspeak. So you perform a *prophetic function*, and I think that's a better way to speak of what happens.

You take Nathan when he was asked by David, "Shall I build a temple, build a house for the Lord?" And Nathan says, "Go ahead and do it; the Lord bless you." But you see that was his own word. It wasn't God's word because the Lord came to him that night and says, "Go back and tell David: You aren't to build me a house. I'm going to build you a house"--in the sense of a dynasty. So Nathan misspoke. He spoke when he was being asked by David to speak as a prophet. He spoke as a man. He had to go back and correct himself when the word of the Lord came to him.

Elisha & The Taunting Youths & Bears

It is the recognition of God's Word being spoken through a prophet, and if that prophet is going to be ridiculed, then it's not a personal thing; it's an office thing. In the case of Elisha, I think they recognized that he was the successor to Elijah, and even

though they were taunting him with being bald, their disrespect went beyond just that to his function and his office. Verse two of 2 Kings 2:23: “From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking on the roads, youths came out of the town and jeered at him, ‘Go on up, you bald head.’ They said, ‘Go on up!’ He turned around and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord, and two bears came and mauled 42 of the youths.” The comment I put in the NIV study Bible is: “Elisha pronounced a curse similar to the covenant curse of Leviticus 26:21-22.” The result gave warning of the judgment that would come on the entire nation should it persist in disobedience and apostasy.

Thus, Elisha’s first acts were indicative of his ministry that would follow God’s covenant blessings that would follow those who looked to him. You see that there was the healing of the water there in Jericho, which was the answer to one of those questions. His first act, beginning of his ministry, was indicative of blessings that would come to those who looked to him because covenant curses would fall to those who turned away from him. So it seems to me there’s some symbolism involved in the relationship, or attitude you might say, of those youths who were against Elisha and the attitude of the nation towards the Lord. In that action, it’s not just a personal revenge, getting back at somebody who was taunting him. It’s significance is reflected in his office. But it also reflects the attitude of the nation towards the Lord because certainly the attitude toward Elisha involved that attitude toward the Lord since he was a prophet of the Lord. The text leaves that open; it doesn’t say they were killed. I’m not sure what the Hebrew word behind that is. I could make a note of checking that out and try to remember next week to make a comment on it. That’s 2 Kings 2:24.

D. Ahijah’s Warning to Jeroboam – 1 Kings 14

Let’s get back to Ahijah’s warning, 1 Kings 14. The same prophet who had told Jeroboam that he would be given a kingdom now declares that it will be taken from him. That’s in verses 7 and following of chapter 14. The Lord tells Ahijah, “Go tell Jeroboam this is what the Lord the God of Israel says, ‘I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of

David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes. You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal. You have provoked me to anger and thrust me behind your back. Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel, slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung until it is all gone. Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city and birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country. The Lord has spoken.”

So that message of judgment is given to Jeroboam by Ahijah. The setting, as you remember, is Jeroboam’s inquiry to Elijah about his sick son. He sends his wife in disguise, and he doesn’t fool Elijah by that. But he’s told that the son will die. And you find that in verse 12 where he says, “as for you, you go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die.” I think it’s interesting that you get a reflection of what is often been termed the “covenant lawsuit.” I think you get a reflection of that covenant lawsuit and the judgment that Ahijah pronounces. You notice in verses 7 and 8 Ahijah recites the gracious acts of the Lord: “I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. And I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you.”

So those of you who are familiar with that analogy between the Hittite treaties and the biblical covenant material, the Hittite treaties begin with that historical prologue. And so does the biblical covenant material with the gracious acts of the Lord: “I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, do this and this and this.” So that when Israel turns away from the covenant and a prophet is sent to bring Israel back to the covenant, you’ll often find in the prophetic books (now this isn’t in a prophetic book but it’s a prophet speaking) that prophets will use sort of a form that reflects that covenant form. They will first recite the gracious acts of the Lord: “Here’s what I’ve done, but here’s what you’ve done. I’ve been faithful and gracious, but you’ve turned away and been disobedient,” and then pronounces sentence. So you see here in 7

and 8a you have the gracious acts of the Lord. And in 8b and 9 you have the indictment, “But you have not been like my servant David. You have done more evil than all who were before you. You have made for yourselves other gods.” And then the third element is the sentence that you have in 1 Kings 14, verse 10 and following: “Because of this, here’s what I’m going to do.” So I think you get some reflection of that in the form of the message there that Ahijah brings. Alright, that was “D” “Ahijah’s Warning to Jeroboam.”

E. Nadab’s Reign – 1 Kings 15:25-28

“E” on your sheet is: “Nadab’s Reign, 1 Kings 15:25-28.” In chapter 14 and into the early part of chapter 15 you switch back to Judah there with Rehoboam. But then at 15:25 you read: “Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah. He reigned over Israel two years.” Nadab only reigned two years. You only have these four verses that speak of him, verses 25-28. He’s really not an important king, and he’s killed in what you might call a palace revolt. You read in verse 27, “Baasha, son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar plotted against him, and he struck him down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it. Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah and succeeded him as king.”

2. The Dynasty of Baasha

a. Baasha’s Succession

So that brings us to “2,” “The Dynasty of Baasha,” and I have several sub-points there. “a” is “His Succession.” I’m not going to spend a great deal of time on this dynasty of Baasha, but his succession is 1 Kings 15:27-30 and then 33 and 34. As we already know, Baasha killed Nadab who was Jeroboam’s son. Then he killed all the house of Jeroboam fulfilling the prediction of Elijah that Jeroboam’s house would be wiped out. So you read in verse 29, “He did not leave Jeroboam anyone to breathe; he destroyed them all, according to the word of the Lord given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite--because of the sins of Jeroboam.”

b. Baasha's Wars Against Judah – 1 Kings 15:32

Alright, “b” is: “His Wars Against Judah, 1 Kings 15:32.” We just had the brief statement, “There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel throughout their reigns.” Now we read more of that when you read about the rule of Asa in the South. Baasha fought with Asa in the south. The occasion for that hostility was the attempt to prevent northerners from going south to worship. Jeroboam built the altars there. He was concerned about that, and as Baasha comes on the throne, he's still concerned about that. As we discussed last week, when Baasha attacks the south, Baasha provokes Asa to make an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Damascus in Syria. Then Baasha was forced to stop that pressure he'd been putting on the south. Alright so those were his wars against Judah.

c. Jehu's Prophecy – 1 Kings 16:1-7

“c,” “Jehu's prophecy, 1 Kings 16:1-7.” Now Jehu here is termed “Jehu son of Hanani.” It's not the same Jehu who later was a king. But this Jehu was a prophet, and he told Baasha that his house would be destroyed just like that of Jeroboam. You read in verse 3 the Lord says through Jehu, “I am about to consume Baasha and his house. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.”

d. Elah's Reign – 1 Kings 16:8

“d,” is: “Elah's Reign, 1 Kings 16, verse 8 and following.” He was the son of Baasha, and again, not an important king. He only reigned two years. You read at the end of verse 8, “Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah two years.”

Then you get another revolution which is “e,” “Zimri's Usurpation, 1 Kings 16:9-13.” Zimri, one of Elah's officials, plotted against him. And you read in 10, “Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him,... then succeeded him as king.” So Zimri was

one of Elah's officials. He plots against him. He kills him and then he does the same thing Baasha had done. He kills all the house of Baasha. And you read that in verse 11: "He killed Baasha's whole family. He didn't spare a single male whether relative or friend." Zimri's reign, however, was very short lived. He reigned for seven days. You read that in verse 15: "Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days." And then he killed himself. You read in verse 18, when Omri marches against Tirzah where Zimri was, you read in verse 17, "Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. When Zimri saw the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord in walking in the ways of Jeroboam."

f. Interregnum, Four Years

And then "f" on your sheet is: "Interregnum, Four Years." It seems that after the death of Zimri, it seems like there was a time of struggle between Omri and Tibni for the kingship. It seems like it was four years before Omri finally wins out and consolidates power sufficiently to be proclaimed king and ruler. The reason I say that is if you look at 1 Kings 16:15 you read there, "In the 27th year of Asa, king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days." And then Zimri kills himself. But you compare that with 16:23 where Omri becomes king and you read, "In the 31st year of Asa, king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel. He reigned 12 years." Six of them in Tirzah; that's verse 23. So that's the 31st year compared to the 27th year of Asa. So it seems like there's a four year period there where there's struggle between Omri and Tibni. In verse 21, "The people of Israel were split into two factions: half supporting Tibni for king, the other half supported Omri. But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni. So Tibni died, and Omri became king." He really officially begins to reign in the 31st year of Asa. So it looks like there's a really lengthy period of instability and uncertainty about who was really going to win out and become king.

D. The Dynasty of Omri

1. Omri Himself – 1 Kings 16:15-28
 - a. Succession – 1 Kings 16:21-22
 - b. His New Capital

Ok that brings us down to “D” That was the first two dynasties of Israel. “D” is “The dynasty of Omri.” And “1” under “D” is “Omri Himself, 1 Kings 16:15-28.” I had three sub-points there, first is: “Succession, 1 Kings 16:21, 22.” We’ve already looked at that. You read in verses 21 and 22 about that struggle between Omri and Tibni, and then actually in verse 23 you read that he becomes king. You read that he reigned 12 years, six of them in Tirzah, which means he reigned six years in Samaria. “D” on your sheet is: “His new Capital.” You read verse 24, “He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill calling it Samaria after Shemer, the former owner of the hill.” Omri is an important ruler. He selects a site which was a strategically located site. It was well chosen, located on a hill, easy to defend, centrally located in the territory of the Northern Kingdom and he establishes there a new capital city. Samaria remained the capital then of the Northern Kingdom from that point until the time of the captivity in 722 B.C. It quickly became even larger than Jerusalem to be the most important city in Palestine. When the Assyrians finally came and attacked the Northern Kingdom, Samaria was able to hold out for three years. They laid siege to that city that was a difficult city to take and they were able to resist until eventually they had to surrender. But Omri sets up a new capital.

- c. His Statesmanship

“C” is “His Statesmanship.” This is on your outline. There’s not a lot said about that, but apparently he made friendship with Judah. We don’t read of wars between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms during the time of Omri. There is no reference to conflict there. It seems that he concluded alliances with some of the surrounding nations, and that’s clear in the case of the Phoenicians because his son Ahab married Jezebel who was the daughter of the king of Tyre. You read that in 1 Kings 16, verse 31, under the

comments on Ahab where it says that “He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him”. But undoubtedly that was a marriage alliance concluded between Omri and Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians.

d. Omri’s Importance

Alright “D” is: “His Importance.” There’s not much said about him in 1 Kings. You only have verse 23-28, six verses. But the interesting thing is in Assyrian records, Israel is referred to as “the Land of Omri” as late as 733 by Tiglath-Pileser III. So that’s 733 B.C., 150 years later. Omri would be about 880 B.C. In 733 B.C., Tiglath-Pileser III, referring to Israel, speaks of it as “the land of Omri.” Shalmaneser III calls Jehu, the “son of Omri.” Jehu is kneeling before the Assyrian ruler giving the tribute, but Shalmaneser calls Jehu the “son of Omri,” which is interesting because he really wasn’t the son of Omri. In fact, Jehu was the one who wiped out Omri’s dynasty, or Ahab’s line. But you see the name was important to the Assyrians not knowing all the details of the royal lines in Israel. He’s just known as the son of Omri because he’s on the throne in Samaria. And then also King Mesha of Moab on the Moabite Stone says that “Omri, king of Israel, humbled Moab many years and occupied the land of Medaba.” Medaba is an area to the east of Jericho on the eastern side of the Jordan River. So from some of these extra-biblical references, you get the idea that Omri was a rather significant figure even though the biblical text does not say much about him.

Now, I said something about that earlier in this course, and I think the reason that the biblical text doesn’t dwell on Omri is that it’s not the purpose of the writer of 1 and 2 Kings to dwell on political, economic factors. It’s the covenantal issues--the issues of Israel’s faithfulness to the Lord that are of utmost importance to the writer. And so instead of dwelling on Omri, he dwells on Ahab, Omri’s son, who introduced Baal worship through his marriage with Jezebel. You get a number of whole chapters devoted to Ahab, much more than you do to Omri. I think we can say that the relation of Ahab to Omri is similar to that of Solomon to David in this sense: each inherited the kingdom his father had established. Solomon came on the scene after David had really built the

kingdom, you might say. And Ahab comes on the scene after Omri has established an important kingdom in the north of Israel. Each inherited the kingdom that his father had established.

2. Ahab -- 1 Kings 16-22

a. Ahab's Person – 1 Kings 16:29-34

Alright, that brings us to Ahab, which is number, “2” in your sheet. There are quite a few chapters (chs. 16-22) there devoted to Ahab. You notice I have quite a few sub-points here too. The ministry of Elijah and Elisha, to a large part, fits into the time of Ahab. Now Elisha goes beyond that into the time of Ahab's sons. But let's look first at Ahab's person, 1 Kings 16:29-34. “In the 38th year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel and he reigned in Samaria over Israel for 22 years. Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him. In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua the son of Nun.”

So as far as his person is concerned, he's pictured as doing more evil than any king before him. He not only continued the calf worship of Jeroboam--and that almost becomes a trivial thing--he goes much further than that and institutes Baal worship. So clearly he violates not only the second commandment, but also the first. He served other gods.

Jericho

You have that list of things that he did that ends with a reference to the

refortification of Jericho, verse 34. Jericho had remained what's called an "open city" since the time of the conquest. Remember when the Israelites came into Canaan, the Lord gave Jericho into their hands as they marched around the city and the walls fell down. They were destroyed at the hands of the Lord. And Joshua at that time pronounced a curse on anyone who would refortify Jericho.

Now I think there's some significance in that. You can ask the question, "Why was Jericho to remain an open city?" It seems to me that God's intent there is that those ruined walls were to be a testimony, or a symbol, to all succeeding generations that Israel had received the land from the hand of the Lord as a gift of his grace. It wasn't their military strategy or military might that acquired the land of Canaan for them. The Lord gave it to them. And those ruins were to be a monument to the fact that they received the land from God's hand as a gift of his grace. So it was to remain an open city as testimony to the fact that Israel's security didn't lie in military fortifications. Their security rested elsewhere, it was in obedience to the Lord, and the Lord promised that he would protect them.

But now you get a king on the throne in the north who isn't a true covenantal king, and he looks at that city with its ruined walls, and in his judgment that's a liability rather than a strength. It's a liability rather than a symbol of promise. So you read that in Ahab's time, Hiel rebuilds Jericho and I think that's to be understood as refortifies it, rebuilds the walls. It speaks of laying the foundations and setting up its gates. But he does that at the cost of his two sons according to the curse of Joshua.

That goes back to Joshua 6:26. Chapter six of Joshua tells about the taking of Jericho and Joshua says in verse 26, "Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city Jericho. 'At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.'" And you think all through that time, through the time of the Judges, the time of Saul, the time of David through the time of Solomon, even with all the great building activity of Solomon, Jericho remained an open city. It depends on how you set the time of conquest, but if you put it at 1446 B.C., you're down now into the 800s, five or six hundred years. So it remained an unfortified

city for a long time. But now Ahab doesn't like that. I think that the attitude of Ahab is that he's trusting not in the Lord but in his own military strategies and fortifications and armies and so forth.

b. Ahab's Wife Jezebel – 1 Kings 16:31

“B” is “His Wife, 1 Kings 16:31.” He married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Tyre and Sidon were prosperous sea-trading cities on the coast of Phoenicia. The marriage was probably arranged in connection with an alliance between Ethbaal and Omri, Ahab's father. As we read in subsequent narratives, Jezebel turns out to be a very strong-willed and ruthless woman. She probably came to Israel thinking that these people are backward people, uncultured people compared with Tyre and Sidon, thinking their religion was unacceptable. So she establishes Baal worship and maintains a core of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the goddess Asherah. You read that in 1 Kings 18:19, “Summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.” So she provided for these 850 heathen prophets that she imported into the Northern Kingdom.

She also shows that her idea of kingship is completely contrary to the biblical or covenantal idea of kingship in the matter of Naboth's vineyard. Remember Ahab was displeased because he couldn't convince Naboth to sell his vineyard, and Jezebel enters into that and abuses the judicial system. She arranges for false witnesses to testify against Naboth so that he is stoned. Then she takes the property and gives it to Ahab. It's that incident. Of course, Ahab had some complicity in that he went along with it, and it's that incident that leads to Elijah's prophesy of judgment on Ahab's house. But Jezebel certainly is a prominent figure in the Northern Kingdom this time and had an active role in the introduction of heathen worship into the Northern Kingdom. 1 Kings 16:32, 33, “He set up an altar for Baal in the temple that he built in Samaria, and he made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.”

When Jeroboam had established the golden calves, we talked about that before, it seems like although he was still violating the second commandment: “thou shall not make unto thee a graven image,” he was still attempting to worship the Lord, though through improper means, but it was still the Lord. When he did that, that man of God out of Judah rebuked him for it. And Baasha, as he continued that calf worship, was rebuked by Jehu, son of Hanani. But now you have a new thing: it’s not just a golden calf. Now it’s Baal worship, and that is introduced by Ahab.

Elijah and Elisha

The Lord opposes it by sending Elijah and Elisha. So here sort of in the heart of the book of Kings, at the end of 1 Kings and overlapping in the first part of 2 Kings, you have a great deal of material given over to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. I think Baal worship represented the greatest crisis in the religious life of Israel from the time of the entrance into Canaan till the time of Christ. If you reflect on that, this is a serious crisis for Israel. Is true faith going to remain among God’s people? So there’s a great deal of attention given to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as they confront that issue.

The interesting thing is: you also have here one of the great periods of miracles and signs, one of the greatest periods to be found anywhere in the Bible. It seems that signs and wonders usually accompany great turning points in the history of redemption. If you reflect on that a minute, you have, I think, basically four periods in biblical history of great miracles. You have it at the time of Exodus and Conquest. You have them here in the time of Elijah and Elisha. And then you get them during the time of the life of Christ and also in the early days of the church. These are great turning points in the history of redemption, and you then get sort of a profusion of miracles at those critical periods of redemptive history.

Ok what I want to do here is stop our discussion of Ahab for a bit and turn to a discussion of something I’ve said I’m going to discuss and that is: How do we get at the meaning of these narratives for today? In other words, how do you preach on the historical narratives of the Old Testament? Let’s take a break and when we get back, I

want to address that issue somewhat in a more theoretical way initially, and probably that's all we'll get done tonight. Then we will look at some of these narratives of Elijah's ministry, which is where we will move to try to illustrate from some of those passages what we talked about in a more theoretical way. How do we get at the meaning of these narratives? So let's take a 10 minute break and come back, and we'll move into that.

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