

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 28, Elisha, Ahab, Assyria, the End of the Northern Kingdom

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The announcements for you today, as you can see. It's one of my better stories. 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 what? Some kind of speech. Let's sing our Ose Shalom. Again, you probably don't remember parts of this terribly well because when we get to the chorus, it rambles all over the place.

But let's see what we can do with this. You can kind of let your voice wander around in that chorus, and chances are you'll hit some of the notes right because they do some rather odd things. At any rate, it is a lovely little Hebrew song that I hope, if you go to synagogue at some point, you will encounter.

Also, thinking just a little bit ahead, the Holocaust Memorial Survivors Service is on April 21st at Peabody High School. They always sing this one there, too. I'll probably be saying something more about that a little later on, but if you can possibly 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. And there's a really nice little contingent of survivors on the North Shore.

Did any of you hear Sonia Weitz when she was on campus in the fall? She's probably the most articulate spokesperson for that wonderful community that's here. Well, let's take some time to pray together as we start, and then we'll 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, especially having revealed yourself as the person of Jesus Christ. Word incarnate, Father, we're thankful as we approach the 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, devotion, and intentionality to remember again what it has meant for you to redeem us and pay that price.

Father, I would pray for each of us as we travel this weekend that you would give traveling mercies and safety, that you would be pleased to use us as lights in the family context in 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. And so, we would ask all these things boldly and with thanksgiving 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 of 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.

And just to review a little bit, how many different dynasties do I want you to know in the Northern Kingdom? Guess four, yeah, right. And we talked about the first three. What were they? You can sneak a preview.

No, it's not a preview, a review. If you look at your notes, who started the first dynasty in the Northern Kingdom? Starts with J, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Following him was, that starts with B. Anybody remember? Does anybody have notes? I'm going to put the chart up here in a moment, but I just want to see where we are.

Yeah, Christina. Yeah, Basha, good. And then the third one, Omri, is splendid.

Okay, divided kingdom, end of the Northern Kingdom. Here's the chart that we're looking at, and got to find my pointer. We made our way last time through Jeroboam, the Basha dynasty, and we got Omri sort of on the table with his son Ahab.

And, of course, Ahab and Jezebel are, unfortunately, best known because they were the ones who were responsible for importing Baal worship as the state religion. And that, of course, was the context then in which Elijah is called to minister. In particular, we have that 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 the Northern Kingdom today, all right? So, if you're thinking to yourself, well, what happened to all these guys? We're getting there, Lord willing, a week from today when we come back after Easter vacation.

We'll pick up with the Southern Kingdom and take care of those plus a few more. But our purpose today is going to be to start with Ahab again because there are a couple

of incidents that are awfully important in terms of Ahab. We'll go very quickly from Ahab down to Jehu.

He's going to 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 Jeroboam that comes along.

So that's how we're going to label him to distinguish him from 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 that the horrors of the end of the Northern Kingdom are just, I mean, things are a mess.

And there seems to be civil strife and factionalism in this area and that area. So, it's terrible near the fall of the North. We also want to focus just a little bit on, well, we'll talk about Elisha as well, but we want to look at the context for our 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 groundwork for understanding some things about Jonah particularly. 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 into which to insert these texts that you're reading, particularly in 2 Kings and the parallels in Chronicles as well. Assyria, first of all, some names we're already familiar with.

Notably, Shalmaneser III. You're reading in Old Testament parallels the material from Shalmaneser III that 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 steles. Standing stone that indicates the G who comes to pay tribute to Shalmaneser. Again, you've read that in Old Testament parallels.

I'm kind of moving on a little bit. We also have Tiglath-Pileser III. If you're not really happy about writing all of that out, there are two ways to deal with it. You can do the same thing the biblical text does.

Well, they occasionally call him Pul. So, when you read Pul, that's Tiglath-Pileser III. Or you can just write TP3.

The biblical text doesn't do that, but that's a short way of talking about Tiglath-Pileser III. I'll say a little bit more about those as well. 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 of them are important figures. Both of them are showing up, well, so does TP3, shows up in the biblical text as well. Now, Assyria has been looming power for centuries.

Starting in the 9th century, it's on the rise, and particularly in the 8th century, they're going to be particularly powerful as they wipe out the Northern Kingdom. Well, first of all, as they make the Northern Kingdom totally subservient and tribute to them, but then they'll also 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 Asher Nasser Paul II.

Now, he's going to precede Shalmaneser III, but just hang on to this. In fact, 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.

All right? They might 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 and a half, someone like Jonah who's told, go to Nineveh and prophesy. Maybe once we have this in our minds, we can understand why Jonah hightailed at the other direction and went west instead of east.

Just listen. This is Asher Nasser Paul bragging. I flayed. Oh, by the way, what does it mean to flay somebody, F-L-A-Y? Anybody know? It's not exactly a nice thing.

Nick, it's actually to slice their skin off. It's pretty ugly stuff, okay? I 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 bound to stakes round about the pillar. And this is his monument for bragging about all these things he's doing, right? Many within the border of my own land, I flayed.

In other words, not only the enemies out there but the people that were revolting against him. I spread their skins upon the walls, and I cut off the limbs of the officers who had rebelled. It's not exactly happy stuff.

And again, just a tiny little slice. Oh, that's a bad pun if we're talking about flying. I'm sorry.

Sorry. But 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 from the Lord to this people. And, of course, when we do Jonah, we'll understand even more because the nature of that message is pretty significant.

Well, a couple of other things we want to just remind ourselves of. We still want to keep on our radar screens the name Ben-Hadad, because you're reading about him as well. And then, Ben-Hadad gets assassinated by a guy named Hazael.

If you've read your Old Testament parallels, another very important text was discovered just in 1992, by the way, at Dan. We now know that Dan is 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, 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 I remember correctly, 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 only 1992, but also 93, they found some pieces of this inscription, and what it has on it is, or I should say is, basically a bragging on the part of Hazael, ostensibly, in terms of 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. I just thought I'd spelled annals wrong there.

All right. Anyway, this is just a little bit of a footnote for those of you who are going on in biblical studies or interested in this kind of thing. There's a whole school of thought that says, 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, a whole school of thought, called minimalists, say it really wasn't a house of David. There really wasn't a Davidic dynasty.

There really wasn't a King David and a King Solomon that were of any consequence whatsoever. All that stuff was made up, and made up several centuries later, to give Israel a little bit of a history. Well, what's fascinating is the Tel Dan inscription dates to the ninth century, and it refers to house of David.

And this guy from Hazael, from Syria, whose name is Hazael, is bragging about the fact that he's wiped out the house of David, the King of the house of David, and the

King of Israel. Now, here is 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.

This is for your own help when you're reading little bits and pieces of stuff about religious things that 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, and it doesn't work. One of the best epigraphers in the world, whose name is Anson Rainey, says that's nonsense, all right? At any rate, tell Dan the inscription; very helpful.

I have a picture of it somewhere up here. But I need to tell you as well that Egypt is still on the scene, not as powerful. It's Assyria and Syria who are making life difficult during this time.

But there's always Egypt down there. And of course, Egypt is going to be one of the places to which the major Assyrian empire aspires, because they want to control the breadbasket of the Middle East. All right, here's Jehu, Shalmaneser III, again, now we're backing up a little bit.

And there's Jehu paying homage to Shalmaneser. Here's our Tell Dan inscription, okay? You've got the Beit David right in here. Where is it, right there, okay? And it's nicely, close up, highlighted for us to see it, very helpful. Again, this is in paleo Hebrew, so for those of you 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, Beit, D-V-D, basically, and that's not a DVD, it's David, okay? 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 greater length. Okay, we need to move on.

Map, you always have to have a map of these things. This is just to give us a little sense of the superpowers of the day and what they were aspiring to. Here's Assyria under Shalmaneser III, about whom we have just talked, because he's the one who had Jehu paying tribute to him.

Notice at that point, Samaria is still outside of their control, all right? Samaria's down here, Shalmaneser III's getting to that point, but he's extending his tentacles. By the time we get to Tiglath Pileser III, 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, Esarhaddon, 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.

We'll catch up on the South later on. But we do have to talk about Jehoshaphat because Jehoshaphat does, well, Jehoshaphat's an interesting guy. He's a good person, he's 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 throughout the land. He gets rid of all the garbage that's been there.

But he does something that's a little bit foolish. He makes an alliance with the Northern King. And 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 from the North named Athaliah. That's going to set the stage for some really ugly stuff that we're going to look at a week from today, all right? So that's mistake number one. He's probably doing it because, on the surface, the Northern Kingdom looks more powerful.

It's bigger, it's more prosperous, they've got a lot going for them. They've had a good interaction with Phoenicia, and they've imported all this stuff. The Northern Kingdom looks good.

Remember, we come back to that over and over and over again. People are falling for what looks good, looks cosmopolitan, looks like it's going to advance me 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, removing the high places, getting rid of the Asherah poles, and sending out teachers of the Torah. Very important stuff going on. I can't in any way minimize the importance of that.

He also appoints judges. Just a little note: I've repeatedly said how important names are. Jehoshaphat's name means the Lord judged.

So bound into his name are some of the things that, interestingly enough, he ends up doing, which the scriptures certainly affirm him. First Chronicles develops the Joshua scene a little bit more, as you can see, even by my including these references. And it's a good time.

It's a good time for the Southern Kingdom. It's a time of prosperity. It's a time of relative peace.

However, First Chronicles 19 also indicates to us that his alliance with the North is not something the Lord was pleased with. And we can understand why. The North is awash in Baal worship.

I just need to say this again. I know I've said it already. Ahab and Jezebel had imported Baal worship as a state religion.

So, what on earth is Jehoshaphat doing, making alliances with them? And yet he does. Well, 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 Ahab is a fundamentally evil person.

And we're going to look at just a couple of things, three to be precise, three incidents that give us little windows into Ahab's life in different ways. The first is an international kind of thing. First Chronicles, sorry, I mean Second Kings, Chapter 20, no, let's try that again.

First Kings, Chapter 20, I'll get it right. First Kings, Chapter 20 tells us that he's pretty successful, at least at this particular point in time. He defeats Ahab and Ben-Hadad.

Are you guys awake? I'm not. Ahab defeats Ben-Hadad, king of Assyria. At any rate, in the general type of rules of war, he should have done away with Ben-Hadad.

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 the king is walking by, well, this is what happened to me because I lost track of somebody I was supposed to keep guard on, and of course the king is angry, and then the prophet says, that's you, you didn't handle Ben-Hadad the way you should have.

At any rate, there's ongoing constant warfare there, but I just want you to kind of highlight 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, and 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 as a private life, we also see some very ugly things here because he has rather of a fit when he can't get Naboth's vineyard.

And perhaps you know that story that happens to be 1 Kings chapter 21. He turns his face to the wall, it says he's sullen and angry. I mean, 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 his prize? Sorry, Ahab can have Naboth's prize vineyard. Chris, did you have your hand up? Yeah, she has him killed, but do you notice how she does it? It's really nasty. She says, proclaims a fast.

In other words, set up a really religious-looking kind of thing, right? And then have 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, so that Ahab can have his vineyard.

And, of course, after this all happens, 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. Verse 22: I'll make your house like that of Jeroboam and Sodom and Nebat.

In verse 23, dogs are going to devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and birds of the air 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 are going to 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. And so also, in this case, there is no honor there. And then I noticed verse 25, there was never a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, 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, okay, vilest way.

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 surprisingly, there's been this ongoing conflict back and forth, chapter 20 and so forth, 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 remote Gilead. Remember, that's that hub point always. That's going to be a source of conflict right on through our Jehu narrative.

But at this point, they're now in the city gate. What happens? Who's Micaiah? Take a guess. He's a prophet, right? If he's uttering a prophecy.

Here's the way the narrative goes. Jehoshaphat says, shouldn't we consult a prophet about whether or not to go? And all the court prophets are saying, sure, go ahead, you're going to fight, you're going to win, not a problem, you're going to beat any of those Syrians out there. And Jehoshaphat pushes a little more and says, how about a prophet of the Lord? And then what does Ahab say? 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. And so, they bring Micaiah, and the messengers that go to get Micaiah say, here's what the prophets have been saying, subtext, you'd 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? Let's read the text. It's rather strong.

In verse 17 of chapter 22, First Kings, I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. That means they don't have their king any longer, the 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 to Jehoshaphat, didn't I tell you I never prophesied anything good about me? But Micaiah goes on, and I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the hosts of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

And the Lord said, who will lure Ahab into attacking remote Gilead and going to his death there? One suggested this, and another suggested that. And finally, the spirit. I know your NIV says a spirit, but there's a definite article there. Finally, the spirit came forward and 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 the mouths of all these prophets. The Lord has decreed disaster for you.

Now you're just sitting there thinking, well, 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 involves 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. 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 Ahab do? It means he's kind of taking seriously the message, but not really.

What does he do? This also attests to the possible gullibility of Jehoshaphat. Do they go to battle? How many say yes? They go out to battle, don't they? Even though the message has been Ahab is going to die in the battle at Ramoth Gilead. They still go.

But to what extent can we see that maybe Ahab has sort of been bothered by this message? What does he do? He goes in disguise, thinking, I'm going to trick the Lord; no problem, I can get by with this.

I can fake it. And then the other side of it is, what does he tell Jehoshaphat to do? You dress up in the royal robes. In other words, you are the person that everybody's going to try and get.

And of course, that's what happens initially. Because the Syrians have been told you 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. If he's the lesser of the two in the alliance, it may be that he has to do what Ahab tells him to do. But isn't it fascinating that Ahab both takes this message seriously and also doesn't? And as a result of a random shot from an archer, he loses his life there.

And is going to die in a pool of blood. This is a wonderful reading if you can kind of take off your stained glass windows and recognize there are some really incredible things going on here. In terms of humans, what's the right word? Deceptions and human plans and human conniving.

Also, God's sovereignty overrules all of it in the process. At any rate, that's our Ahab instance here. I just wanted to give you a little bit of a sense of what city gates looked like.

This is the one at Dan, by the way. Israelite period city gate. Here's what the archaeologists found.

One of our teachers is 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 a column, which is a natural one, they've actually reconstructed what may have been the scene at this city gate. Column bases.

Pillars that would sort of hold up a canopy because things could be a little warmish. The person is seated right under here. Petitioners are walking up this whole cobblestone area.

Right over there, you see little bits of a bench where others might have been sitting as well. Now, just to make a tiny connection for you. Right behind this, in other words, if you're facing that 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.

So, it was found in this city gate area in Dan. Well, we need to keep moving along to Elisha. Elisha is a bright light in some of the dreadful stuff that's happening in the Northern Kingdom.

Elisha gets a double portion of Elijah's spirit. I'm not going to read 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. As you read it, you see certain expressions repeated and repeated as Elijah and Elisha move slowly out of Israel towards the Jordan River.

And their interactions with the prophets and their interactions with each other are always the same. The same language. Because we're going somewhere with Elijah and Elisha.

And Elisha knows that something pretty incredible is going to happen but doesn't know exactly what. They cross the Jordan River. How do they cross the Jordan River? It splits, doesn't it? And then what happens on the other side? Well, if you are in Chapter 2, the water is divided in Chapter 2, Verse 8. They cross over on dry ground.

I hope you're having some sort of echoes of some other things where there have been crossings on dry ground, both the Exodus and also crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. And then Elisha says, Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit. And Elijah says, If you see me when I'm taken, this will indeed happen.

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared, and they separated the two of them. And Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. And then he gets the double portion of the spirit.

He 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 gets the major press when we talk about these two prophets.

But if you look at the miracles that are recorded in the scriptures, Elisha is the one who has a whole bunch of miracles that actually are more in number and more in quantity as well, quality, qualitative kinds of things. Both of these miracles do indeed look, and 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, that was a problem.

Just remember, J comes before SH in the alphabet. J is the one who is living first. Elisha will inherit from Elijah.

Well, he's going to provide food, he's going to provide water. He even feeds 100 people barley bread. That's going to kind of move our thoughts ahead to John 6, isn't it, when Jesus is feeding 5,000 people.

He raises a dead person. Elijah had done that. Elisha does as well.

You may remember the narrative. Just put Shunem up here. This woman and her husband who had made a place for Elisha to stay as he's passing back and forth, and he wants to repay him in some way.

So, he says, what can I do for you? And the long and the short of it is he prays that they'll have a son, and they have a son. But what happens? 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 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 that you can see 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 beer, 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. 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 somebody from the dead. We'll look at the map in a moment.

It's a profound miracle. But notice these are adumbrations of things that Jesus would do. He heals Naaman.

What's Naaman's problem? He's got leprosy, doesn't he? And he comes from afar, comes from Syria. He's the enemy. Did you get that? He's a general from the enemy army.

A little slave girl who'd been captured and was living in his household is the one who said, hey, you really ought to do something about this and go and see what you can find in Israel that'll help you. Talk about being a witness in a dark area. There she is.

Naaman was healed of his leprosy. Jesus also heals people of leprosy in great numbers. And then we have this instance where Elisha has some knowledge to outwit the enemies.

In fact, it gets to the point where the king of Syria says, who's the person who's a traitor? Who's giving away the information? Who's telling all my movements? And the folks know that it's Elisha. All right. 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 latter guy is going to be anonymous, but he's being commanded by Elisha, commissioned, I should say. Tuck your cloak into your belt, take this flask of oil with you, go to, of course, it's remote 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, go to 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 ran because his life would possibly be 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 king over the Lord's people Israel.

And now verse 7 and 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, in verse 9, I'll make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Verse 10, as for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.

Do you remember Elijah had talked about that? So we've got kind of this prophetic continuity here in terms of what's going to happen. That's Elisha's, not his final act, but the last one that we're going to look at. I'm just getting a little bit of geographical context for the story I mentioned to you a moment ago; here's Shunem, all right? And again, if you're remembering, here's our Jezreel Valley, a major battleground.

We've talked about this already. Here's Shunem, right around the hill, there's Nain. Hard to see it in its white print.

Shunem, Nain. Probably a grand total of maybe 2 1/2, 3 miles distance. Maybe a little more if you've got to go around the mountain.

That gives us some sort of a sense of why people would say there's a prophet here when Jesus raised this young man from the dead. Okay, another thing just to keep in mind in terms of our Jehu anointing, remote 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, as Jehu is anointed here in remote Gilead, he is going to start driving 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, quote, unquote, 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 anyway, you'll have some fun.

As I just said, chapters 9 and 10 do indeed talk to us about this prophecy and 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. All right.

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, seeing him coming, and he says, who up there is going to basically be on my side? And so, some of the people just sort of picture over the parapet, right? She falls down.

Jehu says, throw her down. They threw her down. Some of her blood splattered the wall.

The horses trampled her underfoot. And then Jehu, because he's such a kind, sensitive, and loving soul, says he went in and ate his dinner. And then he says, take care of that woman.

But when they came out, all they could find were her hands and feet and her skull. It's really a gruesome, gruesome picture here. And by the way, in the meantime, he's already killed the king of the north as well.

He's killed the king of the north. Jezebel's the queen mother. He wipes her off.

What else does he do? He completely obliterates the dynasty of Omri. What else does he do? Got rid of the king, Ahab's son. Got rid of Jezebel.

Notice chapter 10. There were in Samaria 70 sons of the house of Ahab. So, Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria.

He says, basically, choose the best and most worthy son of your master, set him on the throne, and then fight for your master's house. But they're so scared, and it lists them: the palace administrator, city governor, elders, and guardians.

They say, uh-uh. We're 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 master's sons and come to me in Jezreel by tomorrow at this time.

So, what do they do? They behead all the sons. They stick them in baskets, and 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 up front, forthright? Mary? Yeah, he kind of tricks them. What does he say in this kind of tricking them? We're going to have celebrations for Baal. Please come.

It's going to just be the best Baal worship thing you ever experienced. Right? And then, of course, the text says in verse 19 that 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 in Baal.

Verse 28, Jehu destroyed Baal worship. However, here's the problem. Here's the, however.

He didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and the worship of the golden calves. And so the last, what's the right word? 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 the Israelites and begins to take off bits and pieces of the northern kingdom.

Well, that's Jehu. Got a little bit more we need to do. We 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 reminding you that we're going to pick up that southern kingdom stuff in the interval a week from today. Jeroboam II, and again, second in your own kind of quotation marks. I'm in chapter 14 of 2 Kings, and I want to simply read for you verse 20.

What do I want to read for you? Verses 23 through 25, because it's kind of helpful. In the 15th year of Amaziah, son of Jehoash, 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 eight 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, 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's going to agree on this, but I think that son of is the thing that probably convinces us. And so, we've got Jonah then prophesying at 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 word of the Lord, the God of Israel. So we've got some interesting things going on under Jeroboam II.

It's a very prosperous time. Again, it looks really 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, a parallel to the unnamed prophet from Judah. But hang on to that.

It's coming. All right. Somewhere here we have yes.

If you read 2 Kings 15, you're going to get a sense of how desperate things have become in the northern kingdom. All right? Probably what's going on here is that, and I said this at the beginning of the class, the northern kingdom itself has fractured. And so, all these persons that are listed, Azariah, Zechariah, Shalem, 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, and they're doing 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 band 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. We're going to come to that later. At any rate, Tiglath Pileser III, we'll invade the north, and read all about it in Old Testament parallels.

In chapter 17 of 2 Kings, we have a very sobering statement. I'm going to read most of it for you because it gives us a sense 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. The King of Assyria discovered Hoshea was a traitor.

Therefore, Shalmaneser seized him. These are the bigger political things under which little Israel is trying to survive. Finally, in verse 7, we have our statement of condemnation.

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord, their God. And 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 depths of what they've been doing. They worshiped other gods. They followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them.

The Israelites, in verse 9, secretly did things against the Lord, their God, that were not right. They built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.

At every high place, they burned incense. They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshiped idols, though the Lord had said you shouldn't do this.

God warned Israel and Judah through his prophets and his seers, over and over and over and over again, as we've seen. But they wouldn't listen. They were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in 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, Asherah pole, bowed down to all the starry hosts. They worshiped 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. 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 for us to see 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, when 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 around us were doing, and we fall that way, too. What is tragedy? The tragic aspect of 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 kind of tear apart any sense of identity, 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 ruining 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 was 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 do 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 the reasons I 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? Oh, 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 are the gods who brought you out of Egypt. Wrong festival time, priests not functioning in the tabernacle. So, there's some real twisting in that Yahweh stuff.

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. So you've got a real mess there.

And the perfect term for it, whoops, I didn't mean to do that. There it is. Syncretism.

A little word that you'll want to have defined, 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 and philosophical beliefs and practices. Therefore, in the Northern Kingdom, you have this: what's the right word? Recognition, I would say, probably 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 the New Testament, you went through all the background for the Samaritans. 2 Kings 17 is where it all kind of gets going. Now, what an interesting way to stop our session.

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.