

1 KINGS 14 – 17

WHO IS REALLY IN CONTROL?

Over the last couple weeks, we have seen Jeroboam go off the rails due to his fear and lack of faith. That began a downhill spiral for him as well as for the northern kingdom of Israel. We then saw a young prophet, who failed to follow instructions given to him directly by God. That ended in his death. When we fail to follow God's path, it never goes well. Both Jeroboam and the young prophet went their own way, one by choice and the other by deception. Nothing seems to be going well in the Promised Land. Chaos seems to be the rule of the day as things spiral out of control. But today we will see God begin to right the ship and show exactly who is in control of His land.

We will cover a lot of ground today, beginning with a prophecy given to Jeroboam, and then we will skip forward in time to see God's hand moving through the prophet, Elijah.

1Kings 14:1 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. ² And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise, and disguise yourself, that it not be known that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who said of me that I should be king over this people. ³ Take with you ten loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what shall happen to the child."

1Kings 14:4 Jeroboam's wife did so. She arose and went to Shiloh and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age. ⁵ And the LORD said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus shall you say to her."

When she came, she pretended to be another woman. ⁶ But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with unbearable news for you. ⁷ Go, tell Jeroboam, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over my people Israel ⁸ and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes, ⁹ but you have done evil above all who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods and metal images, provoking me to anger, and have cast me behind your back, ¹⁰ therefore behold, I will bring harm upon the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will burn up the house of Jeroboam, as a man burns up dung until it is all gone. ¹¹ Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the LORD has spoken it." ¹² Arise therefore, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. ¹³ And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. ¹⁴ Moreover, the LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today. And henceforth, ¹⁵ the LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their fathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. ¹⁶ And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin."

1Kings 14:17 Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah. And as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. ¹⁸ And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Ahijah the prophet.

1Kings 14:19 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁰ And the time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. And he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.

- Reignal years and how they work.
- Jeroboam's son, his successor is sick, so Jeroboam wants to hear from the prophet, Ahijah, hoping for that he will heal the boy.
- Wife disguises herself, guilty conscience, hoping to manipulate the prophet and the prophecy.
- You can't manipulate God!
- Ahijah is warned about the plot and tells the queen that the child will die, and Jeroboam's line will be cut off due to the sin of Jeroboam and that Israel will be uprooted from the land.
- The child died. Jeroboam reigned 22 years and died.
- From this point, we get a succession of kings in both Israel and Judah. They are all evil with one exception. Asa, king of Judah reforms the land of Judah and puts things back on track. However, his son, Jehoshaphat, lets things digress and now both kingdoms are back in the grip of idolatry.
- The kings are chronicled with short descriptions of themselves, their reigns and how each king takes power. Eventually, we get to King Ahab, king of Israel, (in the north) and we are given more details about him than most of the others. This is done for a reason.
- The last several chapters are all set-up for the hinge of the book. And now a prophet by the name of Elijah is introduced. God is about to make some major moves. Let's see what He does.

1Kings 16:29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. ³⁰ And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. ³¹ And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. ³² He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. ³³ And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. ³⁴ In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

Omri was a wicked king. Now his son, Ahab, has become king and we are told that he is more wicked than all the others before him. If you read through chapters 14 – 16, you will see that in order to be the most wicked, you really have to be bad. Israel had continued on the road set forth by Jeroboam. We are now in the Omride Dynasty. And this is the first time, with Elijah, that a prophet is introduced into this dynasty.

The common thread among all these evil kings is that none of them seem to believe that God is in charge. God set Jeroboam up on the throne and Jeroboam began doing things his own way. All of the kings of Israel and Judah, with the exception of Asa, followed suit. All any of them had to do in order to be successful and experience growth and peace, was to repent and follow the will of God. Nevertheless, the power, greed and pride went to their heads and now we see that God will act in a major way in order to prove to them and everyone else that He is in charge of everything – and I mean everything. This is a polemic (explain – not just history, but showing the pagans both of the region as well as both Israel and Judah, who is really in control).

- Jeroboam takes a foreign wife, from Sidon. Military alliance. Sidon is the epicenter for Baal worship at this point in time. We see that Jezebel is a pagan to the utmost degree. She causes Ahab to follow her and they set up a temple to Baal.
- Baal – means lord. He is a storm god. He is in control of the rain. His weapons are thunder and lightning and his enemies are the sea and death itself.
- An aside regarding Jericho. This shows us how rebellious and brazen people had become. Joshua had uttered a curse on whoever tried to rebuild Jericho. We see that Hiel sacrificed his two sons in order to rebuild the city. Things are indeed at an all-time low.

1Kings 17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."² And the word of the LORD came to him:³ "Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.⁴ You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."⁵ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan.⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.⁷ And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

- Elijah prophesies to Ahab that there will be no rain or dew for years, except by the word of Elijah. That spoke volumes. Do you know why? We will see.
- God then tells Elijah to go east of the Jordan, a remote place, to the Brook Cherith. God will send ravens to feed Elijah with meat and bread. He will be able to drink from the brook.
- Supernatural means by the ravens, natural means by drinking from the brook.

- Like in Exodus 16, where God supernaturally supplies Israel with meat and bread, twice a day. This is a [hyperlink](#).
- But eventually, the brook dried up due to the lack of rain. Elijah is now, “paying the price for his prophecy.”
- Now we, (Elijah) have a dilemma. Elijah spoke the word of the Lord and it has come to affect him, as well as Ahab and his kingdom negatively. As we will soon see, the prophecy has had a negative effect on another kingdom.
- So, what do we do when we have yielded to will of God, and we are then affected in a negative way? Can that happen? It just did. Let’s look at what the response should be.

1Kings 17:8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, ⁹ “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” ¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” ¹² And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” ¹³ And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

- Elijah is told to go to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, where God has moved upon a widow to help him, though she doesn't seem to be aware of God's plan.
- Why Sidon? It is the epicenter of Baal worship. Remember that this is a polemic. There is a purpose to all of this.
- Why is the widow picking up sticks to cook her last meal? The drought has affected Sidon also. Why is this important? Baal is responsible for the rain. He is shown to be powerless.
- Is Elijah being rude in his telling the widow to feed him first?
- Against all parental instinct, she agrees to feed Elijah first. This is step of faith on her part, though she still doesn't seem to have any awareness of the one true God. But she seems to believe what Elijah says.
- After having the Brook at Chidron dry up, God has made provisions for Elijah elsewhere. But the provisions aren't at any random place. God has sent His prophet right into the belly of the beast. Sidon is the epicenter of Baal worship. Sidon is also feeling the effects of the drought. And Baal is powerless to do anything about the drought that has come about because of the word of YHWH. This is a cosmic battle with real grass roots implications.
- The supply of flour and oil which were about to be exhausted, never ran out due to the supernatural intervention of God. This woman's faith in the prophet and who he represents, has spared her of starvation. Don't think that the neighbors haven't seen this. Don't think that they are unaware of a foreigner, a prophet in their land who is able, by the word of YHWH, to produce food from nothing. Word got around in those days. The God of Israel is moving.

1Kings 17:17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" ¹⁹ And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper

chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ And he cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?” ²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child’s life come into him again.” ²² And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives.” ²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

- The widow appears to have been convinced of the power of YHWH, but eventually death comes to her household, despite the food God provided.
- With the death of her son, she is convinced that the prophet has reminded God of her sin and that He has killed her son because of it. Elijah doesn’t disagree with her about her sin. But he responds differently than she probably thought he would.
- He carries the boy upstairs, lays him on his bed and then stretched himself upon the boy 3 times.
- Prophets often acted out, as well as spoke the words of God, see Ezekiel 4. Does this remind you of anything NT events?
- The boy comes back to life.
- Remember that one of Baal’s two enemies was death. Baal could not restore the boy, but YHWH did. And he did it in Baal’s territory!

APPLICATION:

Judah and Israel have given themselves over to pagan gods. But Ahab and Jezebel seemed to have gone one step further in building a temple to Baal and then legitimizing Baal worship in the land. We are told these details in order to set up the narrative for God’s response.

Baal was the storm god in charge of rain. God, through Elijah declared there would be no more rain until Elijah said so. Baal is seen to be powerless, not only in

Israel, but in Sidon, Baal's home territory, also. This is a cosmic battle whereby YHWH will beyond a shadow of a doubt who is really in control!

Elijah prophesies the drought and God sends him provisions, but eventually, even though he followed God's will in faith, Elijah too ran out of water.

There are times, even when we are following God, that things get worse before they get better. We have to live in this reality. But what we see is that God responded by sending Elijah to another place. Though his brook dried up, God had made provisions elsewhere, but it wasn't where we might think. Elijah was a prophet of God. And because of that, God moved him from a remote part of the battlefield to the front lines.

God may well do the same to us! Elijah's purpose was to show the people that YHWH is in control and not Baal.

God's provisions were seen by all around. The name of YHWH was seen to be more powerful than Baal.

And in the case of the narrative, Elijah has been introduced as the prophet of God. We now have a new hero in the story. And he will be seen as such by both foreigners and Israelites.

We have to know that God is in control of everything. God is in control of your life, believer. He was in control of Jeroboam's life, but Jeroboam refused to "let" God be in control of his life. What do I mean by that? Jeroboam decided to trust in his own ways instead of going with the plan of God. We all have that same option. But as we have seen, it never goes well.

One way or another, we have to come to the reality, the revelation, that God is in control and that if we only trust in Him – if we have faith in Him and obey what He wants to do through us, things will go according to His plan. But the reality is that we often have plans of our own.

Proverbs 3: 5 - 8

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.**

- 6 In all your ways ¹acknowledge him,
and he ¹will make straight your paths.
- 7 ²Be not wise in your own eyes;
²fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- 8 It will be ²healing to your flesh²
and ³refreshment³ to your bones.

Isaiah 55: 6 - 9

- ⁶“Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
- 7 let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on
him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
- 9 ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God is in control, and if we are willing to look and wait patiently, we can see that He is moving, despite what some may think. God is in control and He will show it. He will provide, but it may not be how or where we think He will. His ways are beyond our own. Therefore, we wait and watch, in faith. And we always move in that faith, trusting in His intervention.

There may be a drought, but as we shall see, when God is ready, rain is on the way.