

May 10: 1 Kings 19-20 and John 2

After the great display of God's might and the shameful defeat of the prophets of Baal, Ahab takes the news to his wife, Jezebel. Jezebel is enraged and decides that she will kill Elijah just as the prophets of Baal were. Elijah runs for his life. He leaves his servant in Judah and journeys into the wilderness alone. While he is there, God provides bread and water for him. The LORD commands Elijah to journey 40 days and 40 nights to get to Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, is where God had given Moses the Ten Commandments. While he is there, God promises that He will leave 7,000 people in Israel. These are the people that did not bow down to Baal. Elijah leaves and on his travels finds Elisha, the one that will succeed him.

Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, assembles his troops to fight against Israel. Ahab is still the king at the time. Ahab has been the most evil and wicked ruler the Israelites have had so far. Despite this fact, God still hands the victory over to Israel and not Aram.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus, His mother, and some of the disciples attend a wedding in Cana. Unfortunately, the wedding party runs out of wine. This was a huge social faux pas back in this time. Mary, Christ's mother, approaches Him, informing Him that there is no wine. Jesus asks what it has to do with Him since His time has not yet come. Nevertheless, Jesus turns the water into wine. In those days it was common to bring out the more expensive wine first and use the inferior wine later in the ceremony. This wine that Jesus made was superior to what they started with. Sometimes God saves the best for last!

Jesus goes with His disciples to the Temple complex in Jerusalem. He sees the money changers and folks selling animals. John makes the point that Christ takes the time to fashion a whip out of chords. This shows that His response was not an off the cuff reaction. Instead, it was well thought out. Further, He does not destroy anything. He merely flips the tables and tells the folks with the animals to get the out of there.

May 11: 1 Kings 21-22 and John 3:1-21

Ahab tries to acquire land from Naboth. He offers a large sum of silver and other attractive things as a trade. Naboth will not sell it, though, because it was an inheritance from his father. Ahab, rather than be reasonable, goes home and throws a tantrum. He lays on his bed, turns his face away, and refuses to eat. Jezebel asks what is wrong. Ahab explains the problem and she devises a plan for him to get Naboth's property. They will call a fast, then seat Naboth at the head of the people. Then on either side of him, they will place two wicked men and liars to bring testimony against Naboth. They do just that and Naboth is stoned to death. As a result, The LORD casts His judgment on Ahab. After hearing God's judgment pronounced, Ahab tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth, and fasts. It seems that he is turning to The LORD. Since he shows signs of repentance, God will spare Ahab's kingdom during his time. The judgment will be meted out during his son's time.

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and Ahab form an alliance. Jehoshaphat recommends consulting The LORD. Ahab doesn't want to consult the man of God Micaiah because he never prophesies anything good for the kingdom. Instead, it is all bad. Ahab would rather hear what he wants to

hear than the truth. They go out to battle and Ahab is killed, they wash the blood off of his chariot. The dogs lick it up and the prostitutes bathe in it just as The LORD had said.

Jehoshaphat, Judah's king, was a good king. He removed the pagan practices and the cult prostitutes. Ahaziah, Ahab's successor continued in his father's evil ways, leading Israel into further depravity.

In the New Testament reading, Nicodemus approaches Jesus at night. Some believe that he came in the cover of darkness because he did not want anyone to see him meeting with Jesus. However, it is more likely that this was the only time that either he or Jesus had time to meet. Jesus explains to Nicodemus that He has come to set the people free from their sin. Some will see the light and reject it, though, because they love their sin more than God. Those that believe upon Him will be saved.

May 12: 2 Kings 1-3 and John 3: 22-36

Ahaziah, the king of Israel, fell through a latticed window and was injured severely. Rather than send his men to ask Elijah if he would recover, Ahaziah sends his men to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron. Elijah learns of this and proclaims that Ahaziah will not recover. When the king learns of the proclamation, he sends 50 men to see Elijah. They demand he come down from the top of the hill. They are consumed by fire. A second group of 50 came, they demand that he come down. They are also consumed by fire. The third group came and they humbly asked him to come down. Then Elijah came down to meet them. Even though Elijah has come to talk with the men, the proclamation remains the same.

It was nearing time for Elijah to die. He and Elisha are going over the turnover process. Elisha asks that he be given two shares of Elijah's spirit. If he sees Elijah depart, then it will be granted to Elisha. If not, then he will not. As they are walking, a chariot of fire appears and separates the two of them. Elijah is taken up and Elisha is given two shares of his spirit. He is now the man of God. Unfortunately, for a bunch of rowdy boys begin making fun of him. They tell him "Go up, baldy! Go up, baldy!" Two female bears come out of the woods and maul 42 of them. The boys were most likely more mature than what we gather from the reading. They were probably preteens. They were not killed, they were mauled, so it is understood that they would recover from their injuries. I guess we should remember this story when we want to make fun of our bald friends!

Joram becomes king after Ahaziah dies. He is still evil, but not as evil as his mother and father. He at least removed the sacred pillar for Baal that his father had made. Moab had been giving offerings of their lambs and wool of the rams. Since Ahab is no longer king, Mesha the king of Moab, decides they will no longer pay tribute. The Moabites and Israelites engage in battle. The Moabites are struck down.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is baptizing. John the Baptist is also in the vicinity baptizing. A dispute breaks out between John's disciple and a Jew that had been baptized by Christ. He takes the matter to John. John explains that he has stated he is not the Messiah. He must decrease, but Christ must increase. John knew that his ministry and his work was not about

glorifying himself. Instead, it was all about glorifying Christ. My prayer is that in our lives we will approach the work we do for The Lord in the same mindset. We don't do things for our glory, we do it for His. He must increase, but we must decrease.

May 13: 2 Kings 4-5 and John 4:1-30

Elisha comes across a widow. She complains that she has nothing. The creditor is coming to take her sons away and make them slaves. Elisha asks what she has in the house. The only thing she has is oil. He tells her to go and gather as many containers as she can find. When she gathers them, the oil starts flowing. Every single container is filled. Elisha tells her to sell the oil to pay off the debt and keep whatever is left over for herself and her sons. This woman had to show incredible faith by bringing as many containers as she did. God can make a lot with a little. He has done it before and He will do it again. Sometimes, we might think we have very little, but when we put it in God's hands, He can multiply it greatly.

We read about Naaman, a commander of the army of Aram, a pagan nation. He was a mighty warrior, but he suffered from a terrible skin disease. No one could cure him. On one of his raids of Israel, Naaman brought back a young Israeli girl. She urges him to go and speak to Elisha. He is a man of God that can heal his disease. Naaman obliges, sending a letter to the king of Israel. Elisha reports to Naaman and tells him to wash in the Jordan seven times. Naaman thinks it is ridiculous at first, but he eventually relents and washes in the water seven times. When he does this, he is healed. The power of God is displayed in the pagan nation. Now Naaman declares he will not worship or sacrifice to anyone but God Almighty.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus and His disciples are traveling through Samaria. The Samaritans were considered less than to the Israelites. Normally, when Jews were traveling, they would avoid Samaria altogether. Jesus sends the disciples out for food. While He is at the well, He sees a woman drawing water, asking her to draw some for Him as well. It was not customary for women and men to speak in public like that. She is amazed that He has engaged her in conversation. Jesus explains to her that everyone who drinks water from the well will thirst again. However, when they take His life-giving water, they will thirst no more. People have a God shaped hole in their lives. Some try to fill it with money. Others with possessions or relationships. The only thing that will satisfy that hunger is knowing Christ and having regular fellowship with Him.

May 14: 2 Kings 6-8 and John 4: 31-54

The prophets complain to Elisha that they do not have enough space. They ask to go to the Jordan so they can build a place there. Elisha grants permission. As they are cutting, one man's axe head fell into the water. The man needs it back since it was borrowed. Elisha throws a stick in the water and the iron axe head floats to the top.

Aram wages war against Israel. Things are terrible for Israel. The destitution is so great, that a cup of dove dung sells for five silver shekels and a donkey's head sells for 80 silver shekels. Things are so bad that the king is approached by a woman, asking for his help. She and another woman were so hungry, that they boiled her son so they could eat him. The agreement was that

the next day, they would boil the other woman's son. However, she had hidden him away. The king does not adjudicate in that terribly heinous event. Instead, he tears his clothes and declares he is going to have Elisha killed. He fails to see that it is his rebellion that has caused these issues. Elisha stands before the king and declares that easy times are coming. Six quarts of fine meal will sell for a shekel and 12 quarts of barley will sell for a shekel. The king does not believe it, but God delivers.

Jehoram becomes king of Judah. He follows the way of the Israelite kings and does what is evil in God's sight. During his reign, Edom rebels against Judah. Jehoram dies after eight years on the throne. Ahaziah succeeds him. He too walked in the evil ways of Ahab, doing what was evil in God's sight. The kings had the power to lead Judah and Israel into worshipping Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Jacob. They choose not to. Instead, they remain set in their pagan ways.

In the New Testament reading, the disciples have returned and ask Jesus to eat. Jesus responds that His food is to do the will of He who sent Him. The disciples think that He is talking about hidden bread. As believers, we will find that we are satisfied when we are doing God's will for our lives. We might not be rich, we might not have all the creature comforts of the world, but when we know Jesus, we will have true satisfaction.

We also read about Jesus healing a centurion's son. Jesus does not go to the home of the centurion to heal the boy. Instead, He tells him to go home because his son is well. The centurion is faithful and goes home. He does not ask for Jesus to come there to verify. He doesn't ask "Are you sure?" Instead, he trusts in Jesus. As believers, we can trust Jesus through everything.

May 15: 2 Kings 9-11 and John 5: 1-24

Elisha approaches Jehu, an army commander, with a message. When they enter the house, Elisha informs Jehu that he is the king. The entire house of Ahab will perish. Jehu is anointed as the rightful heir. When Jehu walks out of the house, the servants want to know why "this crazy person" had approached him. At first, Jehu does not tell anyone the news. Instead, he simply responds that they know how crazy people can carry on. They press him and he relents, letting them know he is king. When he makes this announcement, everyone treats him as royalty, removing their garment, and placing it under Jehu. There is no opposition to Jehu's rule.

Jehu then sets about destroying the house of Ahab. He first goes after Joram and Ahaziah. As he approaches Joram, Jehu is asked if he comes in peace. Jehu responds by asking how there can be peace when there is so much prostitution and witchcraft from Jezebel. At this, Joram knows he and Ahaziah are doomed.

Similarly, Jezebel knew she was doomed. She is indignant in the face of death. Rather than repent and change her ways, she gets herself fancy for her execution. She puts makeup on, painting her eyes, and adorning her head. We see that loyalty to Ahab's family was shaky at best since Jehu asks whoever is with him to throw her down and two of her eunuchs follow his orders.

Jehu does not stop there. He completely destroys the house of Ahab and kills all of the Baal worshippers. However, he does not get rid of the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan. He did not completely turn to God and follow Him. Instead, Jehu allowed these idols to remain standing. After 28 years of reigning, Jehu dies and Jehoida becomes king.

In John, we read about Christ healing a man at the pool of Bethesda. The man had been waiting for someone to put him in the pool to cure his paralysis. Jesus asks the man if he wants to get better. Jesus then tells him to pick up his mat and walk. The paralytic gets up and takes his mat, but since it was the Sabbath, he is stopped by some folks wanting to know why he was working that day. He tells them a man had told him to do it, but he could not point Jesus out to them. Later, Jesus goes to the man and tells him to stay away from sin or he might have something worse than paralysis happen to him. Knowing Christ's identity, the former paralytic goes to let the Jews know who had made him well.

May 16: 2 Kings 12-14 and John 5:25-47

At the tender age of seven, Joash becomes king of Judah. I could not imagine taking on such a responsibility at that age. I was still playing with my GI Joes. Joash starts off strong, relying on the older and wiser Jehoidah for instruction. He starts off well, doing what is right in God's sight. The kingdom is in the process of repairing the temple. The folks working on the temple are not audited on their expenses to build the temple because they are honorable men.

Hazael, king of Aram, decides to march against Judah. When Joash discovers the plot, he takes all the consecrated items of his ancestors, along with his own consecrated items, and gives them to Hazael. This satisfies the invading army and they leave. Joash is assassinated by his servants and Amaziah becomes king in his place.

Jehoahaz becomes king in Israel. He does what is evil in God's sight. God's anger burned against Israel, so Jehoahaz then seeks God's favor. The LORD hears him and gives them a deliverer from the oppressive Arameans. After God delivers them from the Arameans, the people remain faithful to the false gods. Jehoahaz even walks in their ways. As a result, they are destroyed by the king of Aram. The people and the king used God like a magic genie. They wanted Him to deliver them, but they did not want the responsibility that went along with following Him. My prayer is that we do not treat our Lord in such a terrible manner. He is with us in the hard times and He is with us in the good times. I wonder why it is so easy for us to forget how good He is to us while we are going through the good times!

Jehoash becomes king of Israel after Jehoaz. Elisha becomes sick with a terminal illness. While on his deathbed, he calls for Jehoash. He tells the king to take a bow and shoot it through a window. He informs Jehoash that God will deliver them from the Arameans. He tells the king to strike the ground. Jehoash only strikes the ground three times. Elisha is upset with him for such few strikes. Unfortunately, they will only push the Arameans back three times.

Amaziah is the king of Judah. He does what is right in The LORD's sight, but not like David had. Amaziah has great victory over the Edomites. This emboldens him to go up against Israel. Jehoash sends word to him, warning against the strike. Amaziah goes through with it and is

given a horrible defeat. The Israelites break 200 yards of the wall between the Ephraim and Corner Gates and take all the gold and silver and other articles found in the king's treasuries and the temple.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus assures them that if they believe upon Him, they will live. He also explains that it is not just He who testifies about Himself through His works. God the Father testifies about Him. In those days, there had to be at least two to three witnesses to give account for someone. Further, Moses, a great hero in Jewish history, testifies about Jesus in his Old Testament writings. Christ calls them out for this. They claim to believe Moses. However, if they actually believed Moses, they would believe Him.

May 17: 2 Kings 15-17 and John 6: 1-21

Judah and Israel continue to become weaker and weaker. Azariah becomes king of Judah. He does what is right in The LORD's sight, BUT the high places remain. Azariah does not remove the pagan shrines throughout the land. He himself does what is right, but he does not lead the nation to follow Yahweh. The text here omits it, but we will learn what he did to earn his skin disease in Chronicles. The reason he lived the rest of his life in quarantine was because he chose to perform a duty that was designated for the priests.

Zechariah becomes king of Israel. He again does what is evil in The LORD's sight. He is killed by Shallum who takes the throne. Shallum reigns in Samaria for a month and is killed by Menahem. When Menahem becomes king, he attacks Tiphshah. He too does what was evil in The LORD's sight. After he dies, Pekahiah becomes king of Israel. Pekah conspires against him and becomes king. Hoshea becomes king over Israel after him. He is the last king of Israel. Israel falls around 722 BC. The text is quite clear on why Israel fell. They did evil things. They made their children pass through the fire, a euphemism for child sacrifice. After the exile, other people move into Israel. Rather than abandon their gods, they continue worshipping them, but they give some honor to Yahweh. They do not go all in for Him.

Judah remains. Jotham is a good king. He does what is right in The LORD's sight. Ahaz, on the other hand does not. Instead, he plunges the people into idolatry. Judah's days are numbered. They have not learned from the mistakes of their brothers to the north.

In John, we read about Christ's miracle of feeding 5,000 with just five loaves of bread and two fish. God can make a lot out of a little. The people are so happy with Him for this miracle, they rush to make Him king. He must get out of there. Christ is rightfully the King. However, the people do not want to place Him on the throne because of who He is, but for what He can do for them. He escapes to the mountains. Evening comes and His disciples are already underway. Jesus walks across the water to them. The disciples are terrified by this sight. They have no need to fear, though. Similarly, we have no need to fear the things of this world. We follow the One who can walk on water. He is mighty and strong to save. We have nothing to fear when we have Him as our Lord and Savior!