

1. My title for this lesson is "how God judges us". The story at this point focuses on specific people that are judged by God for turning from Him with their lives. It gives us clues as to how He will judge us both here and now, and for eternity. As I love to state, the key issue for us as Christians is what have we done with our faith in God? Yes we are saved by faith alone, but if we have that faith we should just want to do something about it. That message is woven throughout the entire bible and comes to a head in these final two chapters of First Kings. Going through these last two chapters, don't think in terms of "Good for this person and too bad for that person". One should think in terms of, "OK, I do believe Jesus paid the complete price for my sins and I do believe that He is God, therefore, what should I be doing about it?" Those are the type of eternal issues being faced here near the end of 1st Kings.
2. It's also time for a reminder about the division between First and Second Kings. There is nothing special about it. It was split into two books simply because it was too big to be combined into a single scroll when it was written. Therefore, as we finish First Kings with this lesson, know that this is a continuous story and the book division is meaningless between the two "Kings" books.
 - a) Which reminds me to tell you, I always list a biography at the end of each book. Since "Kings" is essentially one book, I give that list only at the end of 2nd Kings.
3. With that said, time to talk about this lesson: The first thing to point out is that there are a lot of names to keep track of here. I thought it would be good to give a "roll call" here to start:
 - a) We have King Ahab, king of Israel, which is the Northern Kingdom of the split.
 - i) Then we have his wife, a wicked queen named Jezebel.
 - b) We have King Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom of that split.
 - c) We have Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, a country that was east of Israel at that time. While his name itself is not mentioned by name, it is the same character as stated in the previous few chapters. I believe his name is purposely blotted out as a subtle hint that he is being judged by God here in this chapter, along with everyone else being mentioned here.
 - d) We also have two prophets of God who are prominent here:
 - i) The first is Elijah, who has been a major character for a number of chapters now.
 - ii) Next we have a new prophet of God named Jehoshaphat, who is only mentioned here in this chapter of Kings (and the story is repeated in 2nd Chronicles).
 - e) That's the list of those who have speaking parts. The only other characters here are more false prophets of Baal, plus the Israelite army and the army of Aram.
4. Now for the good news: God is not going to quiz you one day on all these names. When we get to heaven, I don't believe there's an entrance exam question that says, "OK, who was Jehoshaphat and what did he do?" There is always the possibility we may meet him in heaven, but I'll argue that God is far more interested in us learning the lessons presented in this story than memorizing the characters listed. Therefore, the names are here as a reference for us, and that's that.
 - a) So what is the lesson that God wants us to learn here: How God's judgment works. The first thing to know is that it is not as simple as "We live a good or bad life and then God will judge us on a curve based on how we lived." Judgment is much more than whether or not we are saved. God gives us opportunities in life to be a witness for Him. We can lose those privileges based on how we act and that is a key point in this lesson. We will also learn that announced punishments are also an opportunity for us to repent. A key point is that God cares about a relationship with us far more than punishing us.
 - b) As a quick example, King Ahab (listed above) does repent at one point in this story. That is after an announced punishment by God and the text states that Ahab is forgiven despite some pretty bad sins. It shows that God cares more about a relationship with us than He is in punishing us. That is essentially the key point in this lesson about God's judgment. With that said, let us read what actually happens to the characters listed above.

5. Chapter 21, Verse 1: Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.
²Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth."
 - a) Our story opens with an attempt to do a real estate deal. The king wanted to buy a piece of land that was next to his palace for a vegetable garden. The king offered the owner of the land a better piece of land or the cash value of it. So far so good.
 - b) Before I discuss what happens, let me quickly review where we left off and why this story is here to start this chapter. Israel at this point in its history was divided into two separate kingdoms. Ahab was the king of the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom will be mentioned again later in this lesson. In the last chapter, Ahab won two big victories over a neighboring kingdom that wanted to destroy the Northern Kingdom. God allowed the Israelites to win not so much for the sake of the king, but for the sake of the Israelites. At the end of the second battle, an unnamed prophet gave the king a message saying in effect that because King Ahab refused to kill the king who attacked him in the last chapter, soon Ahab will be dead for a lack of obedience to God.
 - i) On that tough note, Chapter 21 starts with "some time later". It's as if the king was thinking, "Who cares what that prophet says, I have a kingdom to run", and at this moment I (Ahab) want this land next to the palace.
 - ii) The text also tells us where the palace and vineyard were located and gives us the name of the vineyard owner, Naboth.
 - iii) Since Kings was written a few hundred years after this event, I believe the author had access to the records of the king and that is where he got the story.
 - iv) Meanwhile, time to get back to the real estate deal.
6. Verse 3: But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."
 - a) If you have a background as a real estate broker, you probably would have not done very well in ancient Israel. That's because they believed all of the land of Israel belongs to God and can't be sold to anyone. In other words the land was divided by the 12 tribes of Israel and it stayed in the families of those tribes. (Leviticus 25:14-16) For real estate appraisers like me, it was actually the job of the priests to value properties when someone wanted to donate it for the priests use it for their use for a while. (See Leviticus 27:12-15). The key point is that land always belonged to one family. It can be leased to others, but it always went back to the original owner after a specific time period.
7. Verse 4: So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.
 - a) The king didn't get his real estate deal so he went home to sulk about it. Today we call that a tantrum. That's what we have here.
8. Verse 5: His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?"
 - a) Here the queen enters the room and works on cheering up her depressed husband.
9. Verse 6: He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.' " ⁷ Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."
 - a) At this point the queen is saying effectively, are you the king of this place or not? Who cares what the bible says. If you are the king, go take what you want. Since you refuse to get your hands dirty here, let me handle this my way and you relax and go eat something.
 - b) At this point it is important to mention how and why God views marriage between a man and a woman: The short version is that God holds the man responsible. If a wife makes a decision and a husband doesn't void that decision, God holds the husband responsible.

- c) Let me explain why that is: If two people are equal, someone has to be the leader. To use one of my favorite jokes on this topic, "If two women slow dance together or two men for that matter, who leads? Someone has to lead". Whether one likes it or not, God decided the men are to be the leader of two equals. That is why husbands are held more accountable than the wives for bad decisions. If anything, that should be a relief to a woman that her husband is held more accountable. To state the obvious, this issue isn't about those who are single or divorced. This issue is strictly about accountability in marriage.
 - d) With that speech out of my system, time to get back to the story.
10. Verse 8: So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him.⁹ In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people."¹⁰ But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."
- a) Before I explain what is happening here, consider the fact that King Ahab chose to marry a woman who didn't believe in God. To paraphrase a quote by the late great bible teacher J. Vernon McGee, "When you choose to partner with an unbeliever, you get the devil as a father in law". To apply that principal here, the wife of the king who didn't believe in the God of the bible organizes a plot to have the landowner of the farm killed so that the king can claim that land for himself.
 - b) The specifics of what the queen did are stated here. She organizes a fast in a town. When a king and a queen proclaim a fast, it is to be taken seriously. A fast usually says that one has been displeasing to God and we need to collectively focus on Him. To avoid eating is a way of saying I care more about God than I do about food for this moment in time.
 - i) Also keep in mind that this queen did not worship God so in her mind, but since she was a queen over the Israelites, she understood enough to proclaim this fast.
 - ii) Anyway, the plot was during a feast to mark the end of the fast, she was going to have two worthless men say that the owner of the farm cursed God. The idea of that type of curse is more than saying bad words. It is the idea that one does not care about God with their lives. Therefore judgment must come.
 - iii) That leads me back to my lesson title. Eternal damnation is effectively given for those who don't care about pleasing God with their lives. When the Israelites do stone this man (albeit for fake charges) they are doing the right thing as they are acting as God's witnesses here of how that person should act. So does that mean God wants us to condemn those who won't turn to Him? Of course not. God calls on us to be a witness for Him. I'm just saying judgment comes based on the idea of not trusting God to guide our lives.
 - c) In the meantime, the queen is hatching up this plot to have owner of the farm killed by having worthless men publicly lie that this farm owner cursed God publicly. To state the obvious coming up, the king and queen will both be condemned by God for this action.
 - i) What is not stated here, but is told in 2nd Kings Chapter 9 (Verse 26) is not only is the owner of the farm killed, but also his sons. That way the rightful people who would inherit this farm also will die in this crime.
11. Verse 11: So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them.¹² They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people.¹³ Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death.¹⁴ Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."
- a) The short version here is for the moment, the king and queen got away with this plan. In fact neither the king nor the queen were present at this gathering so no one would blame them for what just occurred. The good news is that God knows and judges all things.

- b) Before I move on, let me discuss for a moment our own sins and God's judgment. First of all, all sins we have committed before we are saved, are forgiven, if we trust in Jesus' sin payment. We may still have to pay the price to society or suffer other consequences, but one can rest that one's salvation is secured. As far as sins once one is a believer, I don't believe one can sin enough to lose one's salvation. Many Christians disagree with that belief, but I don't. I believe that if one is born again, how can anyone be "unborn"? Therefore, one can lose the opportunities one gets to be a witness for God by sin, but I will argue that it does not affect our salvation. Jesus effectively taught that the only unforgivable sin is the lifetime long denial that He is God. (See Matthew 12:31-32.)
 - c) As to the text itself, it repeats the plan as designed by the queen to show it was executed properly and for the moment they got away with it. If you learn nothing else from this lesson, remember that we can't get away with anything. Even if we die and didn't have to suffer for a sin in this lifetime, there's an eternal price to be paid for sins. Being a Christian does not mean we are better people than nonbelievers, just eternally forgiven. So why do we avoid sin if that's true? If we are born again, we should desire to please God with our lives, which is why we make the conscious effort to avoid sin in the first place.
 - d) For most of us, that is the basics and we know that. However, there is a lot more to learn about God's judgment and our lives, so we read on in this story.
12. Verse 15: As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." ¹⁶ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.
- a) The short version here is that as soon as the king and queen found out the plan has been executed successfully, the king went out to go check out the farm he now got by having the rightful owners killed. Notice the king didn't do anything to stop his wife's plan.
 - b) Even if the king didn't know the details about the plan, he still went to go take possession of what he knew did not rightfully belong to him as the king. This comes back to what I stated earlier how God holds the man responsible as head of the household for decisions and sins made in that household.
 - c) With that said, I have a prayer request that husbands need to make for their wives. Don't ask God to correct one's wives sins. That is because God holds us husbands responsible for her decisions. Therefore, it is better to ask God to watch over and bless our wives so that she can be the type of woman that God desires her to be. That leads to 2 questions:
 - i) What if my wife has some flaws that cause her to sin? How is that my problem as her husband? The short answer is to look in the mirror as we are no better. Our job is not to fix our spouses. God is more than capable of handling that. Our job is to love and support them and be a good witness for God to them.
 - ii) Second question: What if I became a believer after I got married? Should I leave my spouse then? The bible says no, as we are to be a good witness to them. If our spouse chooses to leave because we are now trusting in God, that is acceptable but not necessarily God's will. In summary do what we can to be a good witness for God and let Him handle our spouse and not try to fix them ourselves. If I can just learn to remember that lesson more often, I would be a better husband myself. If you need some biblical support here, read 1st Corinthians Chapter 7.
 - d) OK John, that was nice advice for marriage. What does any of that have to do with these verses here in 1st Kings? The answer is despite the fact that the queen hatched up this plot to have an innocent man killed, God is going to hold both of them responsible. The queen is held responsible for devising this plan and her husband is held responsible for not overruling the plan once it was in place. The fact that the text says he went to go check out the land once the deed was done shows his own knowledge of what was done. Therefore, we next read of God's prophet coming to tell the king who's really in charge.

13. Verse 17: Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ¹⁸ "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. ¹⁹ Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood--yes, yours!' "
- a) Remember Elijah? There was no mention of him in the last chapter. The last we read of him was two chapters back. Then God told him to go anoint three people: The next king of Israel (Ahab's replacement), the next king of "Syria", to replace the man who attacked the Israelite king in the last chapter and a man named Elisha, who would be the next key prophet after Elijah. The text never says whether or not Elisha did all three of those things and in fact we'll read that Elisha, his replacement will anoint those other two kings.
 - b) In the meantime, God has another task for Elijah. It is to say: "OK king and queen, both of you are guilty of murder and just as that person died, so you will die soon." To put it even another way, "That's how you want to treat others? That's how you will be treated".
 - c) It's time to give a few technicalities about this judgment. First, one has to understand the word "dogs" in that culture, refers to wild dogs and not household pets. The idea is that a wild dog will go after a dead carcass that is left for dead. That is what happened to the body of the farm owner and his sons who were falsely killed by this crime. That is what is being predicted as the death of the king.
 - i) Here is the interesting part: That is not where the king died. In the next chapter we will read the king died in battle. Some commentators will argue that the king's blood that was on his chariot was brought back to his castle and that is where the dog's did lick his blood. I see it differently and let me explain: In the bible and in our own life, we can refer to our children as our blood. In 2nd Kings Chapter 9, the king's son did die in the same place that the farm owner was killed so in that sense the prophecy did come true as the king's "blood" was spilled here through his son. While I'm stating all of this, Elijah still has more to say to the king:
14. Verse 20 (Part 1): Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!"
- a) There is an old biblical expression about this verse that says in effect if Ahab had realized that this was God's messenger, he would have realized that Elijah was truly his friend and his wife was his enemy. Because he didn't think that way and because he only thought of Elijah as the one who announced no rain for over three years, that he was the enemy.
15. Verse 20 (Part 2): "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. ²¹ 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel--slave or free. ²² I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin.'
- a) John's very loose translation: Because you didn't stop your wife from carrying out her plan to have an innocent man killed, and you took ownership of that land after the deed was done, you're done being the king. Let's be honest your highness, you forbid God to be worshipped in this country for years. You required Baal to be worshipped here. You also saw the demonstration where God accepted the sacrifice and the offering to Baal was rejected and you still refused to obey Him. Bottom line is for the sake of my people here in Israel, your days as a king are quickly coming to an end and your family won't have any dynasty because you have turned from Me.
 - b) Now if that isn't judgment, I don't know what is.
 - c) Suppose you say, OK, too bad for him. However, I believe Jesus died for all of my sins so why should I care about any of this ancient stuff?" The answer is just as this Israelite king should have known better, stop and think how much accountability we have before God based on what we know of our bible? The price of "getting it" is accountability. That is why we can get judged not by losing our salvation, but by losing our witness for Him.

- d) I would say that is enough guilt for the moment. The good news is that God will spare Ahab of some judgment coming up later in this story. Why God spares Ahab is not only good news for him, but for us as well. However, we have still have Elijah on a roll here telling what will be the judgments pronounced on this family:
16. Verse 23: "And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' ²⁴ "Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country."
- a) John's loose translation: The queen will not get off the hook here either nor will anyone of your family. If any of King Ahab's descendants run away, their bodies will not be buried but eaten by either wild dogs or scavenger birds.
- i) OK, we can understand the sentence upon the queen. She's been a naughty queen for a lot of chapters now. Why punish the kids? What I suspect is the children are old enough to know right from wrong and chose to act like their mother in their own lifestyle. So you know, we will read of the fall of the queen and her children coming up in future lessons. In short, this prediction made by Elijah came literally true.
- ii) Before I leave the literalness of this prediction, notice that Queen Jezebel will die at the same place where this farm was illegally taken. Even in her death, this queen will be a public witness of the price to be paid for turning from God.
- b) With that dooming prophecy hanging over the heads of this family, let me add the next verse which is a commentary, and then I'll add mine:
17. Verse 25: (There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶ He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.)
- a) First, the parenthesis was added by the English translators and is not in the original text. The bible itself is saying that this king and queen were so bad, that God pronounced His judgment in a public way against this couple. If one wants proof of the danger of turning from God with our lives, here are two verses and examples for us to learn from.
- b) Keep in mind that there are a few places in the New Testament where Jezebel is used as an example of the danger of turning from God to idolatry. Here we read of her fate directly.
- c) OK, you may say. I worship God and not idols. Why should I care about her? This is one of those reminders that to follow Jesus cost us nothing and everything at the same time. It cost us nothing in that it's a free gift of salvation that can't be earned. It cost us everything in that God wants a complete commitment of our life to Him. Does that mean I can never have any hobbies or downtime? Of course not. It just means that we live out our lives in order to be pleasing to Him in all that we do with a heavy emphasis on all. With that bit of guilt thrown in about our judgment, let's move on and finish this chapter.
18. Verse 27: When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. ²⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ²⁹"Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."
- a) Here comes the surprise of the chapter. Ahab repented and God took notice. Before I say anything else, think about what this king did: He took a foreign wife who forced Israel to worship Baal and not God. He made a serious effort to have Elijah killed. He allowed his wife to kill someone just to get his land. Now he repents and God forgives him. Stop for a moment and consider our own sins. God wants a relationship with us to the point that He is willing to forgive no matter what we have done. That is why I love to state that the only unforgivable sin is a lifetime denial of Jesus as God. If God can forgive Ahab, then we can have faith that no one is beyond reach. Does that mean that everyone is saved? No. But since we don't know who is saved, we reach out to all people.

- b) But what about the judgment pronounced a few verses ago against Him? Does this mean God can change His mind about judgment? No it doesn't. What one has to understand is that a judgment given by God is in effect an opportunity to repent. Let me personalize it: If one feels guilty about something one did, that is the Holy Spirit telling us to repent and to turn from that sin. We still may have to face the consequences for that sin, but God will forgive us the moment we turn from Him. That's the lesson to be learned here.
 - i) Coming back to King Ahab, he will still suffer the loss of his wife and his family will not have any lasting dynasty due to his sins, but because he was willing to repent and turn from his sins, I do believe he is saved. I suspect we'll find Ahab in heaven sweeping up somewhere, but we'll have to find out ourselves one day.
 - ii) Meanwhile, the final chapter in 1st Kings:
19. Chapter 22, Verse 1: For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. ³ The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?"
- a) To understand where we are going in this final chapter, we should remember what God is interested in accomplishing here: Getting Israelites to trust in Him. You may recall from a few lessons back that God told Elijah to go anoint the next king of Israel, the next king of Aram (a neighboring country to the east of Israel) and Elijah's replacement Elisah. All we read after that was of Elijah selecting Elisha to be his replacement. I state this now as we are about to read of war between Aram and Israel. This is God working behind the scenes in order to get His will done in our world by bringing to an end the lives of those leaders who turn His people away from Him.
 - b) With that stated, King Ahab wanted to take a city that historically was part of Israel. In fact it was one of the places allocated to the priests of Israel. However, at this moment in history, Aram controlled that city. King Ahab was thinking, "It's time to go to war again in order to reclaim that land for ourselves." With that said, the plot will now thicken.
20. Verse 4: So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." ⁵ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD."
- a) Speaking of reminders, its time to remember again that Israel was split into two kingdoms at this moment in history. We haven't talked about the Southern Kingdom (called Judah) in many a lesson. The last we discussed them they had some small border wars with King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom (that's from Chapter 15, 6-7). Anyway, apparently those battles are no longer an issue and how Ahab seeks the help of King Jehoshaphat (say that three times fast!) of Judah. Know that Jehoshaphat is a direct descendant of David and Solomon and was considered a good king that was still loyal to God.
 - b) Now that we know the "players", King Ahab contacts King Jehoshaphat and says in effect, "Help me fight Aram. Together we have a big enough army to beat them." The response of King Jehoshaphat was in effect, "I know that you have a history of not seeking God so I'd like us to pray together and maybe find a prophet of God before we go to war over this." So far so good. Let's read onward.
21. Verse 6: So the king of Israel brought together the prophets--about four hundred men--and asked them, "Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Go," they answered, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand."
- a) All of sudden we have 400 hundred prophets show up and say in effect, "Go attack, you will win". Time for more recall from earlier lessons: Back at the big "showdown" between God and the false god Baal, that 450 prophets of Baal sought him and lost to Elijah. Now recall that Ahab's wife Jezebel ate regularly with the 450 prophets of Baal plus another 400 prophets of the female goddess of Baal named Asherah. (1st Kings 18:19).

- b) My point is that I believe the kings wanted to seek prophets and the queen still had these 400 men alive and nearby. Am I positive it is the same group? No, but the text makes it clear these are false prophets and with 400 of them, the connection seems obvious.
 - c) Also note that this group never invokes the name Jehovah, just the generic "Lord".
 - d) The bottom line is these 400 men are putting on a show for the two kings.
22. Vs 7: But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?"
- a) The point here is the King of Judah recognized they were not prophets of God. It is also possible that Jehoshaphat had a spiritual gift of discernment, which is gift mentioned in the New Testament. (See 1st Corinthians 12:10.) That simply means one has the ability to discern true wisdom from bad advice.
23. Verse 8: The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." "The king should not say that," Jehoshaphat replied.
- a) Let me paraphrase here: "Most of the prophets of God don't live around here as my wife had most of them killed. I have no idea where Elijah is, but I do know of one prophet of God named Micaiah, who is not far from here. I'll go get him. However, I (Ahab) am not found of him as he's always predicting bad things about me." Jehoshaphat's response was "Don't say that, God's will is always what we should seek." (Bottom line, we should seek by His word and prayer His will for our lives be it difficult or easy to accept.)
24. Verse 9: So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once." ¹⁰ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. ¹¹ Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.'" All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."
- a) For those who like good movie scenes, this would make one. The two kings are sitting at the entrance to the city of Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom). At the gate of ancient cities is where elders would sit and watch people come into that city and decide who should be allowed in there. Here the two royal seats were set up for the two kings. Now picture the 400 false prophets putting on a big show for the two kings along with their own props. Apparently the leader of the 400 was a man named Zedekiah who had some iron horns on his head as a prophet was telling the kings, "just as these horns are designed to gore people, so you kings will gore (kill) the Arameans."
 - i) You have to admit, this would make a great scene for a movie or a play.
 - ii) With that said, let's finish setting the scene, and then come back to explain what all of this has to do with God's judgment. Now God's prophet comes on the scene.
25. Verse 13: The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably." ¹⁴ But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." ¹⁵ When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." ¹⁶ The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"
- a) For those of you who think that to be a prophet of God means one has to be serious all of the time and never have a sense of humor, I present this Micaiah character. He's watching the 400 false prophets put on a big show for the two kings and apparently joins the show. He makes some comments that are obviously sarcastic and mimicking the false prophets.
 - b) We know this become one of the kings said to Micaiah, cut it out. Tell us what it is that God wants us to do and don't just mimick what the other guys are doing. This will lead us to Micaiah's actual message to the kings beginning in the next verse.

26. Verse 17: Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.' "
- a) Bottom line time: God does not want this war to happen. Both of you kings are to go home in peace, or else all of Israel will lose badly.
 - b) I bet that message brought this big show of the 400 prophets to a grinding halt real fast.
27. Verse 18: The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"
- a) The comment here is simply, "King Ahab warned, "I know this guy. He never says what we want to hear. He just wants to be negative and bring the party to an end." Again I see Micaiah as having a sense of humor, which is why he mimicked the 400 false prophets. However, what God wants to say, God says, and that's the point here. God's job is not to be a downer for our lives, but the sober reality of how we are to live to make a difference for Him in our lives. Meanwhile I interrupted the prophet Micaiah while he's on a role.
28. Verse 19: Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ²² " 'By what means?' the LORD asked. " 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. " 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' ²³ "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."
- a) All of this text is going to lead us right back to my lesson title of God's judgment. Let me paraphrase the key point here and explain what it means. The key point is that Micaiah is accusing the 400 false prophets of lying. Micaiah is saying that God was asking in heaven who shall go entice the false prophets to lie to the king. A spirit (I believe Satan himself) is the one who responded with, "I will entice him" and that is why the 400 are lying here.
 - b) OK, time for some important bible questions: Does God have to ask for advice of others? If God is God, He can do all things. I don't believe God is even capable of doing evil let alone lying. However He allows evil to exist ultimately for His own glory. That is why He allows these lying spirits to do their thing. Remember that God's ultimate goal here is to bring about the end of the reign of King Ahab as well as the king of Aram. That's why God wanted this battle to happen. Therefore God allows this lying spirit to do his thing here. In short, this is God's way of bringing about judgment on the kings as well as the false prophets to show everyone around who is the true God.
 - i) One more bible question. Assuming this lying spirit was Satan Himself, or just a "run of the mill" demon, why is Satan or whoever allowed to be near God? That is because the bible says that Satan has access to God's throne room as to accuse us of our sins. (See Revelation 12:10). One of his functions is to say why it is we are not worth saving and point out our sins. That's why we can only approach God based on Jesus' blood and not based on our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds. The shorter version is Satan has access to God's throne until the time of Jesus Return.
 - c) All of that leads us back to God's judgment. The point here is that God allows bad things to happen ultimately to show His power over this world and for those who are called to be with Him forever, those disasters show off His glory for our good. Using this story as an example, how would the death of say thousands of Israelite soldiers show off His glory if they are going to get killed? The answer is this war will show who is the true God and that's why God allows these lying spirits and that is why God allowed this "big show" to take place in front of these two kings.
 - d) The bottom line here is that God's judgment occurred as He allowed this lying spirit (who I believe is Satan Himself) to work through these false prophets.
 - e) In the meantime, back to the show itself.

29. Verse 24: Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked.
- The false prophet leader slapped God's prophet in the face and said sarcastically, when did God stop speaking to me and start speaking to you instead? In other words the false prophet is accusing God's prophet of lying himself.
30. Verse 25: Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room."
- Micaiah responded with, "Go seek the true God yourself, pray to Him and find out!" In other words, it's not about dreams and visions. It's about seeking the true God of the bible to find out what is the truth for our lives.
 - Time for a quick word about dreams and visions. I believe God can and does use those in order to communicate His will. However, so can Satan as we read here. The point is if we have unusual dreams, we have to compare them to the word of God and have the bible be our lead source over what is true as opposed to whatever visions we may have. I've lost count of the amount of bad interpretations I've read or seen about the bible strictly based on what one has seen in a dream or vision that contradicts sound bible teaching.
 - Meanwhile while Micaiah was chewing out the false prophet, King Ahab wants to speak.
31. Verse 26: The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son ²⁷ and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.' "
- The bottom line here is that Micaiah didn't convince either king to walk away. Both kings believed the 400 prophets and Ahab decided to put Micaiah in jail until the war was over.
 - One has to wonder what the king of Judah (Jehoshaphat) was thinking in order to trust in these false prophets over the one who had a history of delivering a message from God. It shows the power of the big visual show over the power of the word of God.
32. Verse 28: Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"
- Like I said, this would make a great movie scene. Picture this prophet of God being lead out to prison. As he is being taken away he yells out "If I return safely, you will all know who is the true God and who speaks for Him." The bible does not tell what happened to Micaiah after this. This story is repeated in 2nd Chronicles Chapter 18, but even there we never know what happens to him. I suspect but can't prove after Israel and Judah do lose the war, he is set free, but we'll have to ask him ourselves one day in heaven."
 - In the meantime it is war time, or better said it's time for the slaughter of the Israelites and for God's judgment against King Ahab for not trusting in Him. I said earlier in the lesson that Ahab did repent for a while and trust in God, but that repentance was short lived as we see in these verses here.
33. Verse 29: So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. ³⁰ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.
- Let me paraphrase king Ahab here, "I don't like what the prophet of God said, but just to hedge my bets, I won't wear my royal robes going into battle. However, you oh king of the Kingdom of Judah (Jehoshaphat), you wear your royal robes and see what happens."
 - I have to admit, I give Jehoshaphat credit here for being a king to lead in this battle even after what God's prophet said here. I don't know if he had no fear or somehow that no matter what this prophet said, I promised to help the Northern Kingdom, so here I go.
 - I want you to notice something interesting about this text. King Ahab is not mentioned by name from the time he repented until his death coming up in a few verses. It is to say in effect, I've pronounced judgment on this king and therefore, I won't mention him by name anymore. Yes it is subtle, but makes a good point about how God's judgment works. It is another reminder that God's judgment is not just heaven or hell, but about whatever role in leadership or ministry opportunities He gives us He can take away as well.

34. Verse 31: Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel." ³² When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "Surely this is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, ³³ the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him.
- a) Meanwhile it's time to focus on the other side of the war. We get reintroduced to the king of Aram. This is the same guy who attacked Israel twice in the last chapter and lost. Now he is fighting Israel again. Since King Ahab attacked him twice earlier, the king of Aram (who also is not mentioned by name!) orders the army commanders to only attack against King Ahab. When the King of Judah (Jehoshaphat) cried out, either by his accent or the way he talked, the Aram army realized it was not King Ahab, and left him alone.
 - b) It's interesting to consider all of this from God's perspective: He allowed the king of Aram to live through the last two wars despite the fact that God told Ahab through prophets to have this foreign king killed. Now here is the other king (of Judah) also attacking him. Yet the commanders under him are to only focus on the king of Israel. The point is God wanted both of these men eliminated and you can see God's judgment plan playing out here. In the meantime time, it is now time for the big death scene:
35. Verse 34: But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded." ³⁵ All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. ³⁶ As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town; everyone to his land!"
- a) Speaking of movies, this story just turned into "Weekend at Bernie's". For those of you unfamiliar with that movie, it's the story of a man who died and in order to convince his friends he hasn't actually died, they prop up his corpse in all sorts of strange ways. The reason I state that is that King Ahab dies here, despite the fact he didn't dress up as the king leading the battle. In fact, in order to support his troops, his body is propped up in his chariot despite being badly wounded and soon died.
 - b) Bottom line is the death of the king got the Israelite army to flee away. Presumably a lot of people died as the Israelites ran away just as the prophet predicted.
 - c) The point as it affects you and me is God's judgment happens His way on His timing. In this case the death of the king shows us how God took away the king's opportunity to be a good witness for Him in a way predicted by the prophets to show Israelites who is God.
36. Verse 37: So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. ³⁸ They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared.
- a) Time to recall something from earlier in the lesson. The prediction was made that Ahab's blood will be spilled at the place of the land he wrongfully took by killing the owner. As we can see here, he died elsewhere. In order to make that prediction worked, some have stretched it to say the blood that spilled onto the chariot was taken to the king's home. As I stated earlier, I believe the word "blood" will refer to the king's son who we'll read will die at this same location in 2nd Kings Chapter 9. However that's getting ahead of the text.
 - b) However, as the prophet did predict, he didn't have a proper burial and dogs (think street dogs) did lick up his blood as the prophet predicted.
 - c) You would think that would be the end of the chapter, with the king's death. However we have some more verses to go and believe it or not, it ties to God's judgment.
37. Verse 39: As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ⁴⁰ Ahab rested with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.
- a) Simply: More of Ahab is in 2nd Chronicles (18) and his son Ahaziah is now Israel's king.

38. Verse 41: Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel.
- a) To state what may be obvious to those who have been following this story, these verses are listed out of context of the previous ones. We've already discussed King Jehoshaphat the King of Judah (The Southern Kingdom) in this story. Now we effectively backtrack here to give a more formal introduction of this king.
 - b) First the "what" and then the "why": The what is he was a good king in that he trusted in God to guide his life. His father King Asa and his mother Azuba are mentioned briefly as if to say, give his parents credit for bringing up a good king. We get a negative comment here that he still allowed Baal worship to exist and didn't stop it. The text also says he was at peace with King Ahab despite the fact his father (Asa) had war with him.
 - c) OK, now the why: The theme of these last two chapters is judgment. It is as if the text is saying, "since I'm pronouncing judgment on everybody else here, let me (God) give my judgment on King Jehoshaphat while I'm in that mood of thinking". I think the key point to remember is that this king sought God and tried to please Him with his life and that is why he was saved despite the fact that he allowed false god to be worshipped in there.
 - i) So are you saying God graves on a curve here? Of course not. Again, judgment is not just salvation, it is about being a good witness for Him. The main issue here is that God allowed this king to rule as he was generally a good witness for God.
 - ii) In the meantime, the text has a little more to say about this king while we're in the neighborhood:
39. Verse 45: As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁴⁶ He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa.
- a) Time for my final paraphrase of the lesson: If you want to know all the accomplishments of this king, there were official records kept at that time. The two Kings books focuses on how the kings reigned and how their relationship with God. Speaking of that, the good thing about this king is he got rid of the male shrine prostitutes (that is, the men who had sex in order to entice the false god Baal) who were still there when his father ruled.
 - b) Bottom line: Good king because he sought to please God as he ruled as king.
40. Verse 47: There was then no king in Edom; a deputy ruled.
- a) Remember the Ben-Hadad king mentioned in the last lesson. While he is not mentioned by name, he was prominent in this lesson and the text in effect says he is dead here. So if his name was given in previous chapters, why was it "blotted out" in these chapters? It is to show he was judged for attacking God's people (Israel) and it is a subtle way of saying he was sent to hell and his memory is "no more" for attacking those God cares about.
 - b) You may recall from a previous lesson that God called the prophet Elijah to go anoint the next king of Edom (See 1st Kings 19:16), and here is the epilogue of the last king.
41. Verse 48: Now Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail--they were wrecked at Ezion Geber. ⁴⁹ At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my men sail with your men," but Jehoshaphat refused.
- a) We get one more footnote about King Jehoshaphat (King of Judah) here: He built a bunch of ships to go trade and make money like his great, great grandfather Solomon, but failed. So why is that here? The clue is Verse 49. He refused to let the son of king Ahab be a part of this effort to make money. It is God's way of saying, "I care about the welfare of all the Israelites and because you refused to allow team work, this venture will fail". This is God judging Jehoshaphat's desire for riches for refusing to work with other Israelites.

42. Verse 50: Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David his father. And Jehoram his son succeeded him.
- a) These final verses of 1st Kings is in effect the "passing of the baton" from father to son in both the Southern Kingdom (this verse) and the Northern Kingdom (next verse). In effect the book ends in judgment by saying Jehoshaphat died as a good king who sought God in his life and was allowed a long reign as a good king based on what he did.
43. Verse 51: Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. ⁵² He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. ⁵³ He served and worshiped Baal and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.
- a) Here we have the passing of the baton from father to son in the Northern Kingdom. At the end of Verse 51, it says the son of Ahab only reigned two years. The text is saying in effect, I'm judging this son quickly as he should have learned from his parents mistakes and this son refused to obey me, so his reign was short. The worst crime was that like his mother, he served and worshipped Baal.
 - b) The point is the son was judged quickly as he didn't learn from the mistakes made during the reign of his parents (that the son witnessed growing up) so he was judged quickly.
44. So you know, we covered 82 verses in a little over 12 pages. May God have mercy on me as I did cover a lot of ground in one lesson. However, these two chapters tied well together on the issue of how God judges us, so I ran a little long and put all of these together.
- a) What I want all of us to remember is that judgment is never "My good deeds outweighed my bad deeds, so I am saved". Our salvation is only about trusting in God's payment for our sins so we don't have to worry about our good and bad deeds in that sense.
 - b) With that said, God does judge our deeds when it comes to being a witness for Him. The various characters in this story received or lost their witness for God based on how they did act based on what opportunities God has given them. The reason I opened this lesson by listing all the major characters is not just to remind us "who is who". I did it to remind us that God cares about us and wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him. In this story, some of these characters cares about pleasing God and used their lives in order to make a difference for God. Others didn't and were judged by losing their opportunities to continue being a witness for Him. That's the judgment of this lesson. With that said I'll close in prayer. Thanks for bearing with me through all of this judgment.
45. Father first of all thank you that we don't have to worry about being good enough to be with You for all of eternity. Because You alone paid the price for our sins, we are now free to use our time however we want. Help us to use that time to make a difference for You with our lives. Help us to use the opportunities You give us to be a good witness for You in all that we do. May we live a life pleasing to You by working with others so that You may be glorified by our lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
46. Last thing, I usually list my sources at the end of a book. If you would like to know my sources, they will be listed on my last lesson for 2nd Kings.