

Old Testament History

The Divided Kingdom – Lesson 3

Background:

Introduction:

The violence, wickedness and idolatry that characterized almost all the kings of Israel led to the northern kingdom's fall to the Assyrians. After the death of Ahab, his son Ahaziah (853-852 BC) openly supported idolatry, "for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done" (1 Kings 22:53).

In the southern kingdom of Judah, Jehoshaphat (873-849 BC) continued to reign as king. We are told he "walked in all the ways of his father Asa" and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kings 22:43a). In the third year of his reign he even sent out priests and Levites over the land to instruct the people in the law (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). He enjoyed a great measure of peace and prosperity, the blessing of God resting on the people "in their basket and their store." However, Jehoshaphat didn't go far enough. "Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places." (1 Kings 22:43b)

Despite his accomplishments, Jehoshaphat made one very serious mistake. We're told, "Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel" (1 Kings 22:44). This alliance brought disgrace and disaster upon the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 22:1-33). Barely escaping from the battle at Ramoth-Gilead, the prophet Jehu (2 Chronicles 19:1-3) reproached Jehoshaphat for the course he had been pursuing. To the king's credit, he resumed his former course of opposing all idolatry, and deepened his own interest in the worship of God and in exercising righteous rule over the people and in governing the people in the ways of righteousness (2 Chronicles 19:4-11).

However, Jehoshaphat once again entered into an alliance with Ahaziah, the king of Israel for the purpose of carrying on maritime commerce with Ophir. But the alliance greatly displeased God, and his fleet of ships were destroyed.

Jehoshaphat also had his hands full with the Ammonites, Moabites, and other tribal people who combined to invade Judah from across the Dead Sea. The prophet Jahaziel assured him, however, that there was no need for alarm (2 Chronicles 20:15). When Jehoshaphat went to the scene of the battle with his large host, he was amazed to see the Ammonites and Moabites engaged in battle with the Edomites. Why or how this came about is not clear, but when it was all over these people had almost totally destroyed one another.

In the north, Ahaziah (853-852 BC) occupied the throne of his father Ahab, who had been killed by the Syrians. Unfortunately, this evil son followed in his father's footsteps and paid for it dearly in many ways. In his brief reign, Mesha rebelled against Israel (see Old Testament History – Divided Kingdom Part 4), and Ahaziah was unable to do anything about it, perhaps because of an accident he suffered when he fell through a second-story lattice in the palace to the floor below (2 Kings 1:2). He sent servants to the city of Ekron to enquire of their god Baal-zebub ("Lord of the Flies") as to the prospects for his recovery. But along the way they met Elijah who told them to return to the king and inform him that he will not recover. Enraged Ahaziah demanded Elijah's arrest, but Elijah was delivered twice from those who sought his life. Finally Elijah went willingly to Samaria (2 Kings 1:15), and told the king that there was no hope, because he, like his father, had renounced God. Soon after this the king died as the prophet said he would. Ahaziah was followed to the throne of Israel by his brother Jehoram (Joram), who reigned for twelve years (2 Kings 2:17), contemporary with Jehoram (Joram), king of Judah, and son of Jehoshaphat.

As the time drew near when the prophet Elijah was to be taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-12), he went to Gilgal. Elisha was there among what some have suggested was a school of prophets. Although Elijah had anointed Elisha some years earlier to be his successor, Elisha was disturbed over the thought of being parted from his mentor. Therefore, they journeyed together to Bethel and Jericho and crossed the Jordan River in a manner similar to the crossing centuries before of the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua.

When they arrived at the borders of Gilead, the prophet was suddenly taken up into heaven in a whirlwind by a chariot and horses of fire. As Elijah's mantle (cloak) fell from the sky, Elisha took the mantle and continued the work his mentor had prepared him to assume.

Historical Notes:

In June, 2008, Ferrell Jenkins, a gospel preacher and former chair of Biblical Studies department at Florida College, Temple Terrace, posted the following to his website: Ferrell's Travel Blog (<http://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com>)

"Ramoth in Gilead (or Ramoth-gilead) was a town in Gilead that was included in the territory of the Israelite tribe of Gad in Transjordan (Joshua 20:8). It was one of the Levitical cities of refuge for the Israelites (Joshua 21:38). The most memorable associated with Ramoth-gilead recorded in the Bible is the battle with Aram (Syria) in which Ahab was killed (1 Kings 22). Elijah sent one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu as king of Israel (2 Kings 9:1).

The identity of Ramoth-gilead is uncertain. Two sites are frequently mentioned by scholars: Tall ar-Rumeith and Ar-Ramtha. Burton MacDonald, in *East of the Jordan*, says, "There is also archaeological support for choosing Tall ar-Rumeith, situated in the fertile plain area just to the southeast of the junction of



the 'Amman-Damascus and Irbid-Mafraq highways, as the location for Ramoth-gilead." (p. 200).

Paul Lapp excavated at Tall ar-Rumeith in 1967. Little archaeological work has been done at Ar-Ramtha.

I have not gone into the Jordanian city of Ramtha, but understand that the mound is covered by the town, thus making it difficult to conduct an excavation.

Here is a photo I made at Tall ar-Rumeith in 2002. It is not surprising to see camels here because the desert is near (to the east). From the top of the tell there is a great view looking north across a fertile plain to the border with Syria.



Earlier this year I went back to the site, but found that some modern housing has been built adjacent to the east side of the tell. It appears to be serving as housing for Indian students. I speculate that they attend a nearby university.

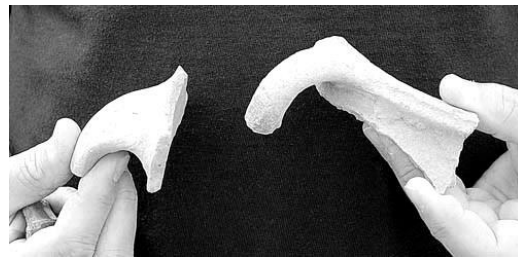


This photo shows a modern trench made to make a road to part of the construction site.

We found some pottery in the road, but cannot be certain that it came from the damage to the tell. I did not see any shards along the edge of the cut.

This illustrates a real problem associated with ancient sites in isolated places. In a place like Jordan there are so many sites that it is impossible to excavate, preserve, and guard all of them. "

("Ferrell's Travel Blog" June, 2008)



Outline:

- I. **The Reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ahaziah in Israel (1 Kings 22:41-2 Kings 2:25; 2 Chronicles 19:1-21:1)**
 - A. Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41-47; 2 Chronicles 19:1-20:30)
 - B. Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:51-53)
 - C. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:45 – 2 Kings 1:18; 2 Chronicles 20:34-37)

II. Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-2:25)

- A. Elijah ascends into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-12)
- B. Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:12-18)
- C. Elisha performs miracles (2 Kings 2:19-25)

Link to Online Bible Study Tools:

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblehub.com/> or <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Library" at the top of the home page)

The Exposition:

I. The Reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah and Ahaziah in Israel (1 Kings 22:41-2 Kings 2:25; 2 Chronicles 19:1-21:1)

A. Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41-47; 2 Chronicles 19:1-20:30)

1. When did Jehoshaphat come to the throne in Judah? (1 Kings 22:41)

2. Describe the moral character of Jehoshaphat (his strengths and weaknesses). (1 Kings 22:42-44)

3. What good acts did he perform in his life? (1 Kings 22:45-47)

4. Who reproved Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab? (2 Chronicles 19:1-2)

5. What words of commendation did the prophet speak? (2 Chronicles 19:3)

6. What judicial reforms did Jehoshaphat make in Judah? What were his instructions to the judges? (2 Chronicles 19:4-7)

7. In addition to these local courts, he established two courts of appeal in Jerusalem, an ecclesiastical court and a civil court presided over by priests, Levites and leading nobles as judges. What did he charge these men? (2 Chronicles 19:8-11)

8. Who came against Jehoshaphat to battle? (2 Chronicles 20:1-2)

9. What proclamation did Jehoshaphat make, and what was the purpose? (2 Chronicles 20:3-4)

10. Concerning Jehoshaphat's prayer before the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 20:5-13):
 - a. How did he acknowledge God?

 - b. What had God done for Israel?

 - c. When evil comes upon the people and they cry in their affliction, what does God do?

- d. What did Jehoshaphat remind God of concerning Ammon, Moab and the people of Mount Seir (in this instance probably an Arabian tribe, Meunim living at the south end of the Dead Sea)?

 - e. What did he ask God to do?
11. Jahaziel, in the Spirit of the Lord, then prophesied deliverance (2 Chronicles 20:14-17):
- a. To whom did the battle belong?

 - b. What did he instruct the people to do in the battle?
12. What did Jehoshaphat and the people do? What did the Levites do? (2 Chronicles 20:18-19)
13. What works of admonition did Jehoshaphat speak to the people? What were his instructions to the singers? (2 Chronicles 20:20-21)
14. What happened in the battle? (2 Chronicles 20:22-24)
15. What spoil did the people of Judah carry away? (2 Chronicles 20:25)

16. Describe the return of the people to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 20:26-28)

17. What effect did the victory have for Jehoshaphat? (2 Chronicles 20:29-30)

B. Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:51-53)

1. Who was the father of Ahaziah? (1 Kings 22:51)

2. Describe the moral character of Ahaziah, and whom he served. (1 Kings 22:52-53)

3. What was God's reaction? (1 Kings 22:53)

C. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:45-50; 2 Chronicles 20:34:21:1)

1. What was the status of Edom at this time? (1 Kings 22:47) ¹

2. What alliance did Jehoshaphat make with Ahaziah, king of Israel? (1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chronicles 20:35-36)

¹ Edom was conquered by David and remained subject to Judah at this time (2 Samuel 8:13-14; 1 Chronicles 18:12-13; cf. Genesis 27:30-40). The deputy who was perhaps appointed by Jehoshaphat functioned as king (cf. 2 Kings 3:4-27).

3. Who prophesied against this alliance? What was the result? (1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chronicles 20:37)

4. What did Ahaziah request of Jehoshaphat? Did Jehoshaphat comply? (1 Kings 22:49)

5. What nation rebelled against Israel following the death of Ahab? Who had conquered this nation? (2 Kings 1:1; cf. 2 Samuel 8:2; 1 Chronicles 18:2)

6. What accident did Ahaziah have? To whom did Ahaziah send messengers, and what was the purpose of sending these messengers? (2 Kings 1:2)

7. Who intercepted the messengers and what message did he send to the king? (2 Kings 1:3-4)

8. How did the messengers describe the prophet to Ahaziah? (2 Kings 1:5-8)

9. Describe Elijah's encounters with Ahaziah's first two captains of fifty. (2 Kings 1:9-12)

10. What happened when the third captain and his fifty met Elijah? (2 Kings 1:13-15)

11. What message from the Lord did Elijah deliver to Ahaziah? (2 Kings 16)

12. Who reigned in Israel after the death of Ahaziah? Why was this person selected, and who was his father? (2 Kings 1:17-18; cf. 2 Kings 3:1)

II. Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-2:25)

A. Elijah ascends into heaven (2 Kings 2:1-18)

1. Trace the journey of Elijah and Elisha? Using the links to biblestudytools.com or biblehub.com what major Biblical events occurred in Bethel? (2 Kings 2:1-6)

2. What did the sons of the prophets tell Elisha, and what was his reaction? Why do you think he reacted this way? (2 Kings 2:3, 5)

3. How did Elijah and Elisha cross the Jordan River, and who was there to witness this event? (2 Kings 2:7-8)

4. Who else crossed the Jordan River in a similar way? (cf. Joshua 3:9-17)

5. What did Elisha request of Elijah before the old prophet was taken into heaven, and what was Elijah's response? (2 Kings 2:9-10)

6. Describe Elijah's ascension into heaven and Elisha's reaction. (2 Kings 2:11-12)

B. Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:12-18)

1. What did Elisha do with Elijah's mantle? (2 Kings 2:13-14)

2. What did the sons of the prophets at Jericho say when Elisha parted the waters of the Jordan? (2 Kings 2:15)

3. What request did they make of Elisha, and what was the outcome of their search? (2 Kings 2:16-18)

