

Survey of the Bible part 19

Last week we left Elijah in the cave at Mt. Horeb and the Lord had given instructions to Elijah to choose 3 different people for 3 different positions.

1 Kings 19:15-16 ¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; ¹⁶ and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

Again, what does this tell us about the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men?

God will choose whom He desires to accomplish whatever His will is, even if appears that it goes against the "free will" of men, as they perceive it.

So Elijah obeys God and now we come to chapter 20.

In this chapter we see an interesting thing in that God is going to use King Ahab and will actually speak to Ahab through a prophet of God. The message is essentially that God will defeat the King of the Aram, Ben-hadad, whose plan is to destroy Israel.

Now, keep in mind that God has already judged Ahab as one who has forsaken the God of his fathers and has adopted the gods of his wife, Jezebel. Part of his judgment is found in the famine in Israel for some 3 years.

The rains have returned to Israel, the prophets of Baal have been put to death by the sword and Elijah is the one whom God has used in this process to judge Ahab. And yet, it appears that God is using Ahab and will actually fight on behalf of Ahab.

1 Kings 20:26-29 ²⁶ At the turn of the year, Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. ²⁷ The sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went to meet them; and the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country. ²⁸ Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because the Arameans have said, "The LORD is a god of *the* mountains, but He is not a god of *the* valleys," therefore I will give all this great multitude into your

hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" ²⁹ So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed *of* the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.

If Ahab has forsaken the Lord why does God bless him and Israel by defeating the King of Aram?

A couple of things to be noted here. The king of Aram has mocked the one true God and the Lord responds to this, but there is another more important reason as to why God fights for Israel at this time and part of it has to do with God's will and God's covenant.

Remember when Israel was in bondage to Egypt, just prior to God raising up Moses, Israel had adapted to the culture of Egypt and in the course of time many of them had forgotten their God and had adopted the gods of Egypt.

But notice what happens when they cry out.

Exodus 2:23 - 25 ²³ Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice *of them*.

The first thing to be noted here is who does Israel cry out to according to the text?

We're not really told. It was simply a cry found in their sighs. Some may have cried out to the one true God, others may have cried out to their leaders, while still others may have cried out to the gods of Egypt.

But what we're told is that God heard their cries and responds. But why did God respond according to the text?

So, God's response is not necessarily because of the honorable spiritual condition of Israel as they worship the God of their fathers, but because God remembers a group of people who lived hundreds of years before this incident found in Egypt and through whom He enters into covenant with them starting with Abraham.

We see this again when Moses is leading Israel in the desert.

Leviticus 26:41-46 ⁴¹ I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies-- or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ 'For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. ⁴⁴ 'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵ 'But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.'" ⁴⁶ These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.

And even in the accounts of the King of Aram we see the reason as to why God would use the godless King Ahab to defeat his enemies and it had nothing to do with Ahab, but with God's faithfulness toward Israel because of His covenant with Abraham.

2 Kings 13:22-23 ²² Now Hazael king of Aram had oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³ But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now.

Men may be unfaithful toward God but God will always remain faithful to His covenant. And what is His covenant toward Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Genesis 22:16-18 ¹⁶ and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

We see the same language given to Jeremiah.

^{NAU} **Jeremiah 33:22** 'As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'

So, the question is: in what way is God going to multiply the descendants of Abraham and David and who are these descendants?

We know that the descendants of Abraham are in one sense the physical descendants who would later become known as Israel. But we also know, as Paul has told us, that not all of the descendants of Israel are really Israel.

Romans 9:6-8 ⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

So, who are the true descendants of Abraham?

Romans 4:16-17 ¹⁶ For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

Galatians 3:6-9 ⁶ Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

So, when God speaks of remembering the covenant with Abraham does that exclude the physical descendants?

No. But it includes the physical descendants only in so far as they are used to advance the ultimate descendant of Abraham who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, that is to say those who are of the faith of Abraham.

In the case here with Ahab God does not destroy Ahab at this time, but actually blesses him.

Does this necessarily make Ahab of the spiritual seed of Abraham?

But he is of the physical seed of Abraham and the covenant that God made with Abraham most certainly included a physical aspect. You can't have a spiritual seed of Abraham without a physical aspect. Why?

Because even the spiritual seed of Abraham, though not necessarily associated with the physical seed, must still be physical human beings. And this leads to another aspect of the covenant that God made with Abraham and that is the physical land.

^{NAU} **Genesis 12:7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

We know that God did in fact give the land to Israel, the physical descendants, because Ahab and Israel are living in it according to our text.

But when it comes to the physical land of promise, not unlike the spiritual seed of Abraham, is the covenant made with Abraham really about the physical land we see in the mid-east today?

No. Both the spiritual seed of Abraham, those who are of the faith of Abraham, and the physical land of promise given to Abraham, are promises from God to extend into eternity and that promise is for the future.

And so, when Abraham got that promise of the land what went through his mind?

Hebrews 11:8-10 ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign

land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

The ultimate fulfillment of the covenant that God made with Abraham was the establishment of the kingdom of God with kingdom subjects who are to be resurrected and live on a resurrected promised land called the new earth.

Just as when settlers from England came to America they renamed the land they settled in as New England. There was a York in England and it came to be known here as New York. And there will be a new earth. But that new earth is what God will refashion through fire and all of Abraham's spiritual descendants will live on a promised land that Abraham longed for.

God will use whatever means to accomplish His will for His people and if it involves godless men like Ahab, or harlots like Rahab, or treasonous people like Judas, God will accomplish all that He desires to do to bring about His plan for eternal redemption for all of His people.

So, through the agency of Ahab God destroys the enemies of Israel. And of course you would think that Ahab would destroy the king of Aram when he captured him, right? Wrong.

1 Kings 20:29-31 ²⁹ So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed *of* the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. ³⁰ But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on 27,000 men who were left. And Ben-hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. ³¹ His servants said to him, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings, please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will save your life."

1 Kings 20:33-34 ³³ Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word said, "Your brother Ben-hadad." Then he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot. ³⁴ *Ben-hadad* said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." *Ahab said*, "And I will let you go with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him and let him go.

A prophet of God then approaches Ahab.

1 Kings 20:42 ⁴² He said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of *your* hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" ⁴³ So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria.

In chapter 21 we have the story of Ahab desiring a field that belonged to a man by the name of Naboth. He offered Naboth another field or money for the field but Naboth wouldn't give it to Ahab, and so Ahab went away gloomy.

Jezebel sees the gloominess of her husband and inquires why he's so down only to find out that it's because of this land deal that didn't go his way. Jezebel then plots to have Naboth put to death and through this plot he is falsely accused of cursing God and the king and so the residents stone Naboth to death.

Jezebel then gives the land to Ahab. This is where Elijah comes back into the picture.

1 Kings 21:17-23 ¹⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸ "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. ¹⁹ "You shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.'" ²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD. ²¹ "Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; ²² and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and *because* you have made Israel sin. ²³ "Of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.'

Interestingly enough, Ahab is humbled by this news and God sees this and tells Elijah to take another message to Ahab.

1 Kings 21:27-29 ²⁷ It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay

in sackcloth and went about despondently. ²⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹ "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, *but* I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days."

Time passes, specifically three years, and Ahab decides to go into battle to fight against the king of Aram thinking that God has given him into his hands. On the contrary God sent a deceiving spirit to the prophets of Israel to fool Ahab into thinking that God was going to fight for him.

In the battle a lone enemy archer indiscriminately fires into the air and it hits Ahab between his armor and later that day he dies.

Two things to note here. God again accomplishes His will by deceiving Ahab into thinking he will win the battle.

How is that fair?

God will turn the hearts of kings and princes to do according to His will.

Proverbs 21:1 ^{NAU} The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

The other thing to note is that even what appears to be pure dumb luck at the hand of this archer is nothing short of God's guiding hand to bring death to Ahab. God is sovereign and He will take what appears to be something indiscriminate and makes it purposeful, which is to say that God guided the hand of that archer when that archer didn't even know it.

1 Kings 22:37-44 ³⁷ So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. ³⁸ They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves *there*), according to the word of the LORD which He spoke. ³⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did and the ivory house which he built and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? ⁴⁰ So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son became king in his place. ⁴¹ Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of

Shilhi. ⁴³ He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD. However, the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

Next week we'll begin 2Kings.