

How does our society respond to God's word? How do you respond to it?

PRAYER IDEAS

Give thanks and praise to the Father of the heavenly lights, source of every good gift (Jas 1:17). Thank him for his word of truth.

Wednesday

- Read 1 Kings 18:17-39 (if you have time you might skim over vv1-16)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the challenge issued to the Israelites (v. 21)? How is the contest proposed by Elijah linked to this challenge?
2. How does the description of the false prophets in verses 26–29 emphasize the tragedy of Israel turning away from the Lord to Baal?
3. What truths do we learn about the Lord in verses 30–38?
4. How would you describe the people's response?

PONDER

Who or what are the 'Baals' of today?

PRAYER IDEAS

Use James 4:6–10 as a basis for a prayer of repentance.

Note:

We find 1 Kings 18:39–40 somewhat confronting. See Deut 13:1-5 for an explanation.

Thursday

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18

QUESTIONS

1. How does Jezebel's response to Ahab's news seemingly quench all that was achieved on Mount Carmel?
2. Which part of the narrative of verses 4–8 reminds you of Moses (cf. Exod 3:1–12.)? What do you think Elijah would have been expecting?
3. What is significant about verses 9–10 and verses 13b–14 in the light of the rest of the passage?
4. In verse 13, what does Elijah 'hear'? (verse 12 literally reads "a sound, a thin silence".)
5. In verses 15–18, how does the Lord correct Elijah's defeatism?

PONDER

What does Elijah hear from God—plan A or plan B?

PRAYER IDEAS

Praise the Lord, who works out all things in conformity to his purposes.

Friday

- Read 2 Kings 1

QUESTIONS

1. How is Ahaziah walking in the ways of his father, Ahab?
2. What do we learn about the Lord in the fates of the three groups of soldiers?
3. How does the narrative emphasize once again the authority of the Lord and his word?
4. What is the right response to the Lord and his word?



15 Steps through the Bible

Kings

While they were in the promised land, God gave Israel kings. The king's role was to be God's 'representative' on earth by ruling Israel and saving them in battle. The most famous king of Israel was David. The king also represented Israel before God. For example, when King David sinned, the whole nation was punished (see 2 Samuel 24). He came to represent Israel's relationship with God.

1 Samuel 12:13-14

"Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you. 14 If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good!"

More detail

God gave Israel kings when they requested them, which shows us:

Who God is

God is patient, allowing fallible kings to make their own decisions, but continually calling them to account. He is also gracious and faithful, promising to build an everlasting "house" for himself through the line of King David.

2 Samuel 7:12-16

"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will

come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

What God does

God calls his people to live as a holy nation under the rule of those he appoints.

1 SAMUEL 12:12-15

"But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us'—even though the Lord your God was your king. 13 Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you. 14 If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God—good! 15 But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers."

How God works

God makes use of a representative—the kings were to exercise God's rule. And if the king sinned, the nation was judged.

1 KINGS 9:4-7

“As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, 5 I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’” 6 “But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.”

PSALM 2:7-12

*I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the
nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your
possession. 9 You shall break them
with a rod of iron and dash them in
pieces like a potter’s vessel.” 10 Now
therefore, O kings, be wise; be
warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve
the Lord with fear, and rejoice with
trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be
angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

This points forward to Jesus, the descendant of King David who preached the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was a king like no other, a humble servant who was obedient to God even to the point of death. The risen Jesus will return as the ultimate King, and will judge the world and save God’s people, as he exercises

God’s rule.

QUESTIONS

1. What did the king represent? Who decided who the king would be?
2. Read through the ‘More detail’ section. What’s something that strikes you about what God reveals here?
3. What is important about king David?

PONDER

In what ways do the kings of Israel prepare the way for Jesus? How is Jesus different to those kings?

PRAYER IDEAS

Pray for humble obedience to the king of kings, the lord of lords. Ask God that many more people would turn in repentance and give their allegiance to king Jesus.

Further readings: ELIJAH

In terms of our 15-step Bible Overview, Elijah was a *Prophet* in the time of the *Kings*, who spoke against Israel as they disregarded God’s *Law*.

King David is dead. The glory of Solomon’s kingdom has been undone by the foolish policies of his son Rehoboam, and the nation is split in two. The northern kingdom (Israel) moves inexorably toward destruction, eventually being taken into exile by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6–23) and consequently moved off the stage of world history.

But in this rather grim situation one of God’s greatest prophets conducted his ministry—the prophet Elijah (whose

name means “my God is Yahweh”). This set of readings taken from 1 and 2 Kings will allow you to spend some time in the company of this great and fearless man of God.

PRAYER

You might like to use this prayer (or your own variation on it) before each of this week’s readings:

*Father God,
Thank you for the ministry of your
servant Elijah. Help me to gather
strength from his example, courage
from his words and grace from his
failings. Above all, help me to know
you better, the one to whom he so
faithfully pointed. In Christ’s name,
Amen.*

Monday

- Read 1 kings 16:29-17:6

QUESTIONS

1. The reign of Ahab is important background to the story of Elijah. What do we learn about Ahab and his reign?
2. Notice the number of times Baal is mentioned in this passage. Baal was thought to be the god of rain and thunder, and therefore of fertility and life.

Why might Baal have been an attractive god to worship? Compare your answer to the depiction of God in Deuteronomy 8:10–20.

3. Elijah makes a dramatic entrance (although it’s nothing compared to his departure!). Elijah comes as the bearer of the word of the Lord that Ahab, Hiel and Israel had rejected.

4. What is the significance of the Lord choosing to withhold rain? (Hint: remember the powers ascribed to Baal; see the previous reading.)
5. What lesson should Israel have learned from this judgement?

PONDER

Although they enjoyed the benefits and blessings of being the people of the Lord, Ahab and Israel sought blessing elsewhere. Are you wondering whether life on the other side of the fence might be greener?

PRAYER IDEAS

Confess any discontentment and temptations to the Lord, and thank him for his absolute and gracious goodness. Ask him to open the eyes of your heart to the blessings you enjoy in him.

Tuesday

- Read 1 kings 17:7-24

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the location of Sidon? (See 16:31.)
2. What is remarkable about the widow in Zarephath?
3. There are several deliberate contrasts being drawn between this widow and Ahab, Hiel and Israel. Can you spot them? What is their significance?
4. What truths about the Lord are portrayed in this passage?

PONDER

Contrast the widow’s response to the word of the Lord to that of Ahab and Israel (See Monday’s reading).

PONDER

Incredibly, Ahaziah walked in the ways of his father Ahab. Such is the folly and stupidity of sin and idolatry.

Where do you see people walking in ways that have been shown in the past to be foolish?

PRAYER IDEAS

Isaiah 66:1–2 would be a very helpful launching point for your prayers.