

A STUDY OF 1 & 2 KINGS

# COVENANT on the Ground

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WITH DR. JOHN N. OSWALT

VOLUME 2: ELIJAH AND ELISHA

STUDENT  
WORKBOOK



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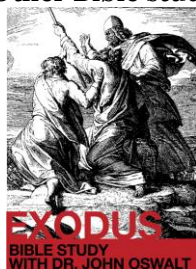
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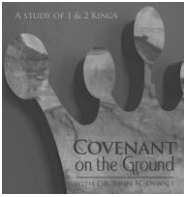


*Isaiah*



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# COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

## 1 KINGS 17–18

### *Opening Conflict*

**Background:** We come now to the second subdivision of the division we have labeled The Divided Kingdom (1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17). This subdivision includes 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 13, nineteen chapters dealing with the Elijah/Elisha ministry and covering about 80 years. Except for the Solomon narrative (1 Kgs 1–11, 40 years) this section gives the most detailed coverage of any period in the book (note that the 55 years between Solomon’s death and the beginning of Elijah’s ministry only rate five chapters). The reason for this is the critical nature of what took place in these 80 years. Here was the central conflict between Baal and Yahweh, with the winner becoming the God of Israel (and, by extension, Judah). It is not out of the question to think that had it not been for the ministry of these two men, we would not have the Bible today, certainly not the one we do have.

- While Elijah and Elisha are two different individuals, their ministry is really one, something that becomes clear as the narrative proceeds.
- Baal was the god of the thunderstorm, and Canaan was absolutely dependent on the rainstorms that came in off the Mediterranean. They had no rivers suitable for irrigation. He was also god of fertility and vegetation, whose death had to be appropriately mourned, including the mourners ritualistically cutting themselves.
- Gilead (1 Kgs 17:1) is east of the Jordan in the region assigned to Gad. So is the Wadi Kerith (1 Kgs 17:3).
- Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:9) was located some 80 miles north of Samaria on the coast between Tyre and Sidon.
- “Palace administrator” (1 Kgs 18:3) is probably equivalent to “prime minister.”
- Mt. Carmel is the high point at the end of the ridge jutting out into the Mediterranean above the modern port of Haifa.

## Introducing Elijah (1 Kings 17:1–24)

1. What is the significance of Elijah’s announcement that there would be no rain except at his word?
2. How many times does the phrase “the word of the Lord” or some other reference to Yahweh’s speaking occur in chapter 18, and what is the significance of this repetition?

3. What are the three miraculous circumstances reported in the chapter? What are some of the truths that emerge from them? Why do you think Elijah is introduced in this way (as opposed to, say, Ahijah in ch. 11)? It is also important to note that the entire Elijah/Elisha ministry is characterized almost uniquely by miracles. Why?

## **Prelude to Battle (1 Kings 18:1–19)**

1. Because the outcome (Elijah's showing himself to Ahab) is made clear in verses 1 and 2a, why do you think the story contained in 2b–15 is included?
2. What insights about Jezebel and about life in the northern kingdom emerge from the account in verse 4? What does this say to us?
3. We know from contemporary records that Ahab had a large chariot force. If the horses and mules died (1 Kgs 18:5), Israel would be helpless before its enemies. So, Ahab tried to find grass. What should he have done before that?
4. Why was Ahab seeking for Elijah (1 Kgs 18:10)? See 1 Kings 18:17. What does Ahab think is the cause of the drought? How do we commit a similar error?
5. What was Obadiah's concern? Why would he have that concern? What does he know about the character of Yahweh?

## **Who Is God? (1 Kings 18:20–45)**

1. Why did Elijah want the prophets of Baal and Asherah present on Mt. Carmel?

2. Why did Elijah demand that the people choose between Yahweh and Baal? Why couldn't they worship both as two different manifestations of the Divine?
3. What do Elijah's taunts tell us about the nature of Baal in his worshippers' thinking?
4. What is the difference in the Baal worshippers' attempts to get Baal to respond and what Elijah did? Why?
5. When God did not respond to Elijah's prayer for rain what did he do? What did he not do? Why?
6. What theological conclusions are we meant to draw from this account?



# COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

## 1 KINGS 19–20

*The Mercy of Yahweh*

Background: Beersheba is at the extreme southern edge of Judah's territory, some 80 miles south of Samaria. Horeb (Mt Sinai) is another 150–200 miles south of that.

- The drought may explain Israel's inability to defend itself from the Syrian (Arameans) (1 Kgs 20:1–5).
- The term translated "merciful" in 1 Kings 20:31 is the unique Hebrew word *hesed*, which is used to describe Yahweh. Although the Israelite kings have forgotten Yahweh, there is still some recrudescence of their old character derived from Yahweh remaining. The application to the U.S.A. is sobering.

## Elijah's Collapse and Recovery (1 Kings 19:1–21)

1. Why did Elijah, after the great victory on Mt. Carmel, run away from Jezebel? What is the danger after a great spiritual victory?
2. Why did Elijah run so far? Why not at least stop in Jerusalem? What does the angel's prescription tell us about how to begin to address spiritual exhaustion?
3. What is the significance of Yahweh's repeated question (1 Kgs 19:9, 13), and what does Elijah's repeated response to Yahweh (v. 10, 14) tell us about his condition? (Why is v. 18 almost parenthetical?)
4. What is the significance of Yahweh's manner of appearing? What does this say about "signs and wonders"?
5. Because it was Elisha who carried out the first two commands (1 Kgs 19:15–16) some believe Elijah disobeyed God. What is a better way to think about this? Notice that the first thing that happens is the call of Elisha.

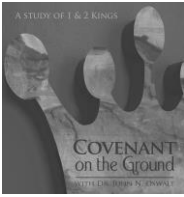
## **Yahweh Delivers Ahab from Syria (1 Kings 20:1–21)**

1. In the face of the threat, what does Ahab do, and what does he not do? What impression of the king do we gain here?
2. What is the picture of the Syrian king here (1 Kgs 20:3, 5–6, 10, 12, 16, 18)? Why do you think the narrator gives so much space to this?
3. What do you notice about Yahweh's promise to Ahab? What does Yahweh hope will be the result?
4. What is odd about the order of battle (1 Kgs 20:14)? Why would Yahweh command this? Think of other examples of this same kind of thing.
5. What did not happen after the victory?

## **A Second Deliverance for Which Ahab Takes Credit (1 Kings 20:22–42)**

1. Once again, what is Yahweh's motive for offering gracious deliverance (1 Kgs 20:28)? What was the Syrians' error?
2. What does verse 27 tell us of the probability of an Israelite victory? So, when the victory was won, who did it? Who was the victor?

3. What part is Ahab playing in verses 32–34? What is wrong with that? Think about verses 13 and 28.
4. It seems as though the prophet could have merely given Ahab the message contained in verse 43 and that would have been enough. Why the elaborate acting out (including somebody getting killed by a lion!)? (Think of Nathan's story to David.)
5. But did Ahab know that Yahweh had "captured" Ben-hadad and committed him into Ahab's hand for execution? How could he have known this? Why didn't he? What is the key to doing God's will?



# COVENANT on the Ground

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## **1 KINGS 21–22**

*The Fight Continued*

Background: The land of Israel belonged to Yahweh, and like medieval kings in Europe, he gave portions of his land to loyal followers. But they only held their lands in trust. They could sell their leasehold to other members of their tribe, but not to anyone else. Should they cease to be loyal followers, the king could evict them from the land. This is exactly what happened in the exiles of 722 and 586 BC. Naboth could not sell his land and be faithful, and Ahab knew it.

- Notice how carefully the format of the book is adhered to. That is, the material relating to one king is fully dealt with before the account of his contemporary in the sister country is taken up. So, Jehoshaphat is mentioned in the Ahab account (1 Kgs 22:1, etc.) before he is formally introduced in his own account in 1 Kings 22:41–50.
- Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kgs 22:3) was located at a vital intersection of the east-west road passing from the coast through the Jezreel Valley with the King's Highway in the trans-Jordan, which ran north and south between the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea and Damascus.
- It is not clear why Jehoshaphat, who is described as a good and God-fearing man (1 Kgs 22:43) would be in alliance with Ahab (1 Kgs 22:4, note also that Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, was married to Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram). Some suggest that the stronger Ahab forced it on him, but there is no indication of that in the Bible. Moral goodness is not necessarily coupled with high intelligence.
- From this point (1 Kgs 22:42) on, we are told the age of the Judean kings when they began their reigns. We do not have that data for the northern kings. This is evidently a difference in the two sources being used, and a testimony to the faithfulness of the authors/editors of the book.

## **Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)**

1. Considering the background above, why do you think this account is included in the larger account of the conflict between Yahweh and Baal?
2. Why did Ahab accept Naboth's refusal to sell, although with bad grace, and why did Jezebel have no qualms about manipulating justice to get the land for Ahab? What two concepts of kingship are involved and how do they relate to the two different views of reality?

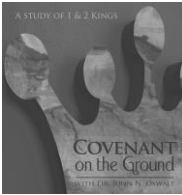
3. Examine the statement of verses 19 and 21–22. What do you conclude about the relationship between the prophet and Yahweh? Recall what I have said previously about possession versus filling.
4. What does Ahab's response to the prophecy tell us about Ahab? And what does Yahweh's response tell us about Yahweh?

## **The Prophecy of Micaiah (1 Kings 22:1–28)**

1. What made Jehoshaphat ask for a prophet of Yahweh (v. 7) when Ahab's prophets had spoken in the name of Yahweh (v. 6)? The number 400 is interesting. Remember that Ch. 19 did not say what happened to the 400 prophets of Asherah.
2. For a description of false prophets, see Jeremiah 23:9–22.
3. Why did Micaiah initially agree with Ahab's prophets, and why did Ahab know he was lying?
4. Many are troubled with the idea that Yahweh would intentionally confirm for someone what they were determined to do anyhow, but see Psalm 18:26. What might be some explanations of this story about the lying spirit?
5. What would have been Micaiah's fate if Ahab had returned safely (vv. 27–28)?

## **Ahab's Death and Jehoshaphat's Reign (1 Kings 22:29–50)**

1. What do verses 29–33 tell us about Ahab and Jehoshaphat respectively? What do they tell us about the Syrians' attitude toward Jehoshaphat? Note the background statement above.
2. Why did Ahab remain standing in his chariot although mortally wounded? What does this tell us about Ahab and about the Bible's reliability?
3. What is the significance of where Ahab's chariot was washed out? Remember also that dogs were thought of on the same level as vultures.
4. Compare what is said about Asa (1 Kgs 15:11) and what is said about Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:43). Do you think the difference is significant? Why?
5. The closing formula for Jehoshaphat is unusual. Ahab's (1 Kgs 22:39–40) is more normal. Here a good deal of information has been inserted between verses 45 and 50 where usually nothing intervenes. What is the information given here, and why do you think it has been included?



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## 1 KINGS 22:51–2 KINGS 2:35

*From Elijah to Elisha*

Background: The clearest evidence that the two books of Kings are a single book is the fact that the regnal account of Ahaziah of Israel starts in 1 Kings (22:51) and then is carried across into 2 Kings.

- In Hebrew, *zebub* (pronounced “zevuv”) means “a fly.” So, Baal-zebub (2 Kgs 1:2) is “Lord of the flies” (the basis for the title of a well-known novel). The significance of the name is unknown, but it persevered into New Testament times, when the Pharisees labeled the prince of the demons as Beelzebub (Mt 12:24).
- There is some question about the location of the Gilgal mentioned in 2 Kings 2:1, because the one referred to in Joshua is in the Jordan Valley, and to go from it to Bethel, which is on the central ridge, is to go “up” not “down” as in 2 Kings 2:2.
- Elisha’s asking for a “double portion” was not asking for twice as much power as Elijah. He was asking to be put in the position of being Elijah’s first-born son. When a man died, his estate was divided into portions. The wife and all the other children got one portion each, but the first-born son got two portions.
- We begin now to see “the company of the prophets” (literally, “the sons of the prophets,” but using “sons” to refer to a class of people). The first occurrence was in 1 Kings 20:35 in the incident of Ahab’s sparing Ben-hadad’s life. There are four occurrences here in Chapter 2, and then five more in Chapters 4–9, and no more. Perhaps they were followers of Elijah and Elisha, raised up by God to support their ministry during this critical time in Israel’s history.

## Elijah and Ahaziah (1 Kings 22:51–2 Kings 1:18)

1. Notice what is said about Ahaziah’s sin (1 Kgs 22:52). A new standard of sinfulness has arisen—not only Jeroboam’s paganizing of Yahweh worship, but what else? What had Ahab and Jezebel done in addition to Jeroboam?
2. Compare what Ahaziah does in 2 Kings 1:1–2 to what Jeroboam did in 1 Kings 14:1–2? What has taken place? Do we see anything similar in modern life?
3. Why did Ahaziah send a troop of 50 men to capture Elijah? Why did he want him? What did he plan to do to him? This should help us to understand what takes place next in verses 9–15. Who is the king here?

4. Why did Ahaziah die? What is the lesson for us in this account?

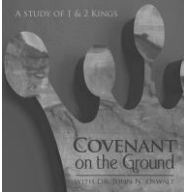
## **Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1–11)**

1. Why do you think Elijah kept trying to leave Elisha behind?
2. Why did Elisha persist? What does it say about the two men's ministry (especially in Elisha's mind, given that he knew what was going on; vv. 3, 5)?
3. There may be some significance in the journey. What was at Bethel? What is the importance of Jericho? What about the manner of crossing the Jordan? Why go to the east side of the Jordan for the translation to heaven? (Who visited with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration?)
4. What is Elijah's most significant possession, of which Elisha asks for a double-portion, verse 9 (see the background above)? What is the source of Elijah's ministry and power? What is the significance of this observation?
5. What is the possible significance of Elijah's not dying but being translated?

## **Introducing Elisha (2 Kings 2:12–24)**

1. Remember that Elisha's call involved Elijah throwing his cloak over Elisha's shoulders. What does it mean that when Elijah was translated his cloak was left behind? (Elisha had torn his own in two, presumably in grief.)

2. What is the significance of the episode of the prophets looking for Elijah's body?
3. The two events recorded in verses 19–24 are location-specific and expressive of the two sides of prophetic ministry. They must not be separated. What is the character of each? What is the significance of that?
4. What does Jericho stand for in Israel's history? What did Bethel stand for at first, and what had it come to stand for by this time?
5. Notice Elisha's itinerary: Jericho, Bethel, Mt. Carmel, and then Samaria. A "sentimental journey"?
6. How does this segment introduce us to Elisha's part of the Elijah/Elisha ministry?



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## 2 KINGS 3–4

*Yahweh's Power Displayed through Elijah*

Background: Remember that Ahab's son Ahaziah ruled for a very short time (6 mos.?) before dying childless. His brother Jehoram (Joram) succeeded him (1 Kgs 3:1)

- Attacking Moab from the south (by way of Edom 3:8) instead of the more obvious way from the north may have been an attempt to gain a strategic surprise.
- Edom was still under the control of Judah at this time. This is why the king of Edom joined in the attack.
- Shunem (2 Kgs 4:8) was located in the Jezreel Valley, a place of agricultural abundance.

## The Attack on Moab (2 Kings 3:1–27)

1. Notice what is said about Joram in 3:1–3 and keep this in mind in regard to his actions in subsequent verses.
2. In the light of what was said about Joram in verses 1–3 why do you think Joram makes the assumption he does as reported in verses 10 and 13? Why do you think Jehoshaphat reacted somewhat differently? What governs our attitude toward God?
3. Did Yahweh command the three kings to do what is reported in verses 19 and 25?
4. How much water did Yahweh give them? What does this say about him?
5. No one knows what verse 27 is really describing. Three main alternatives have been put forward: 1) the Israelite/Judean/Edomite army was so stunned by this atrocity that they lost their will to fight; 2) Yahweh was angry that Joram had provoked this atrocity and so withdrew his support and the army could not prevail; 3) The Moabites went berserk, and the invaders were overawed and withdrew. None is entirely free from problems.

## **The Lady from Shunem (2 Kings 4:8–37)**

1. Notice how the woman is depicted. What does this suggest about the position of women in Israel?
2. What about her actions toward Elisha? What does this tell us about her?
3. Notice what Elisha does offer to do for her, and what he does not? Why not?
4. Think about the theme of childlessness in the Bible (beginning with Sarah)? What is the point? Notice the woman's faith.
5. What do you think is the point of the interplay between Gehazi and Elisha in vv. 20–31?
6. Compare 1 Kings 17:17–24 with this account. Similarities and differences? Why the repetition? What is the overall point being made?

## **Miracles of Provision (2 Kings 4:1–7; 38–44)**

1. For convenience of treatment, 2 Kings 4:1–7 has been grouped here with verses 38–44. But look at 1 Kings 17:8–24 and see if you can explain why 2 Kings 4:1–7 is followed by 2 Kings 4:8–37 here in the Elisha account. Some scholars say that this is really the same event but just told in two different ways. How do you respond to that suggestion? Why?
2. What do these three events have in common (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1, 38)? What does this say about our God?

3. What spiritual lesson can be drawn from 2 Kings 4:1–7?
4. What spiritual lesson can be drawn from 2 Kings 4:38–41?
5. What spiritual lesson can be drawn from 2 Kings 4:42–44?



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## 2 KINGS 5–6:23

Background: “Ten talents” (2 Kgs 5) is about 750 pounds, and “6000 shekels” is about 150 pounds. A great deal of money!

- In the rest of the ancient Near East prophets were in the pay of the king and worked for him, so it is not surprising that the king of Syria would write to the king of Israel (2 Kgs 5–6), expecting that the prophet in question worked for Joram, and that Joram would command the prophet to heal Naaman. Unfortunately, Elisha did not work for Joram.
- Today much of the water that would be in the Jordan river is drawn off by Israel and Jordan. But even in ancient times it was not very imposing (unlike the Nile or the Euphrates). It was more of a creek running in a steep valley filled with thick vegetation.
- Naaman does not quite understand the universalism of Yahweh. He thinks that Yahweh can only truly be worshipped on the soil of Israel (2 Kgs 5:17).
- Two talents of silver (2 Kgs 5:23) is all that Naaman had brought (150 pounds).
- At this time, iron instruments were still relatively rare. The loss of the iron tool (2 Kgs 6:5) would have been a very serious offence.

## Naaman Healed (2 Kings 5:1–18)

1. What is the contrast in 2 Kings 5:1–3? What do you think is the significance of the point being made?
2. What is the significance of the interchange in 2 Kings 5:7–8? What do we learn about prophecy in Israel? What about Elisha’s statement in this regard?
3. Why do you think Elisha treated Naaman in such an off-handed manner (2 Kings 5:9–11)? Was Naaman right in feeling offended?
4. Why dip in the Jordan, and why seven times?

5. Compare verses 2 Kings 5:8 and 15. What does Naaman learned and what is the significance of that?
6. Why did Elisha refuse the gift (2 Kings 5:16)? Cf. Genesis 14:21–24. What is the principle?
7. What do you think about the concession of allowing Naaman to bow to the god Rimmon? Should Elisha have permitted that? Isn't that compromise?

### **Gehazi's Sin and the Floating Axehead (2 Kings 5:19–6:6)**

1. While these two accounts seem unrelated, the sentence structure of the Hebrew of 2 Kings 6:1 shows a continuation between the two. What connections can you see?
2. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Elisha and Gehazi toward this wealth?
3. Why does Gehazi tell the lie that he does in 2 Kings 5:22? Why does he take this approach?
4. What does Gehazi's behavior in 2 Kings 5:24 and the exchange in verse 25 tell us about Gehazi's spiritual insight? Why would he be this blind?
5. How is Elisha's behavior with the company of the prophets different from his behavior with Naaman? Why?

6. How is the prophet's attitude in re. the axehead different from Gehazi's attitude?
7. What is the difference in Elisha's response to the prophet's loss and Gehazi's gain?

## Opened Eyes (2 Kings 6:8–23)

1. We do not know whether the events of chapters 5 and 6 are narrated in chronological order, but if they are, and given the fact that Naaman would have certainly reported how he came to be healed, what shall we say about the Syrian king's spiritual insight (2 Kings 6:8–14)? But even if they are not in order the data reported in verse 12 should lead to certain conclusions. How shall we explain this behavior?
2. We do not know who the "servant" of 2 Kings 6:15 is. Perhaps because of his skin condition Gehazi was no longer with Elisha. However, he is specifically named again as Elisha's servant in chapter 8, so this may be him here. How is his behavior certainly consistent with that of Gehazi earlier?
3. According to this account, and Elisha's statement (2 Kings 6:16), what is one result of spiritual insight? What are some other results?
4. How does the "punishment" (2 Kings 6:18) fit the "crime" of the Syrians in this context?
5. Earlier we saw that Ahab was condemned for not killing the Syrian king Ben-hadad (1 Kgs 20:35–43). How is this situation different? What do we learn?



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## 2 KINGS 6:24–8:6

*Elisha's Ongoing Ministry of Deliverance*

Background: It is not clear how to harmonize 2 Kings 6:23 with 2 Kings 6:24. Verse 24 begins “Now after this....” Perhaps several years passed, or perhaps a distinction is being made between occasional raids and a concerted attempt to capture Israel’s capital city.

- In verse 6:25, note that the redemption price for an adult male was 50 shekels (Lev. 27:3), and that Hosea bought Gomer off the slave block for 15 shekels (Hos. 3:2). Verses 25–29 give some sense of the horror of a siege.
- The sequence of events from 2 Kings 6:32–2 Kings 7:2 is not quite clear. After first holding the door closed against the messenger, was it then opened to admit the king and his officer? Or was the door kept closed and Elisha spoke through the door (or by a messenger) to the king and the officer outside?
- Gates in ancient cities were complex structures. In Israel at this time, they would have been composed of three or four successive spaces, each one having heavy, barred doors. Presumably, there were suicide troops in each space ready to attack if that set of doors should be broken down. The spaces were covered, and there were holes in the covering so that arrows could be shot and lances thrown at any enemy who succeeded at getting into the space below.
- It is not clear whether the lepers (2 Kgs 7:3) were outside the gatehouse or in one of the three or four guardrooms in the gatehouse. If they were actually outside the gate, it seems probable that the Syrians already would have killed them. If they were in the gate, they would have left through one of the small sally-ports (small doors through which reconnaissance troops could “sally” out to see what the situation was).
- It may seem strange that the Syrian army could be stampeded in the way they were (2 Kgs 7:6–7, 15). However, as we know from events of 2020, it does not take much to provoke mob hysteria, and once the mob is in motion it is very hard to stop it.

## Famine in Besieged Samaria (2 Kings 6:24–7:2)

1. What does the incident recounted in 2 Kings 6:28–29 remind us of? What do you think is the significance of including it here?
2. What do you think are the implications of the king’s reaction in 2 Kings 6:27? What is his attitude toward Yahweh? Recall the discussion on 2 Kings 3:10 and 13. Look also at 2 Kings 6:33b.

3. Why do you think the king reacts in the way he does as reported in 2 Kings 6:31? Why blame Elisha for the distress? What are some possible explanations? When do we think and act similarly?
4. Elisha promises that contrary to the king's expectation, Yahweh will deliver his people. The king's counselor frankly mocks the promise. What are the lessons in this whole incident for us?

## **Deliverance Comes (2 Kings 7:3–20)**

1. Notice the detail with which this entire story is told. Why do you think this is the case?
2. Why make the point that these men were lepers?
3. 2 Kings 7:9 is a good example of mixed motives. Why did the men inform the city of what had happened? Give some thought to your own motivations. Why do you do what you do?
4. Why did Yahweh do this?
5. How does the king's reaction here (2 Kgs 7:12) mirror his attitude earlier?
6. Notice how repetitive 2 Kings 7:17–20 is. What is the point being emphasized? Is there more than one? Why is the author doing this? What is its significance for us?

## **The Shunamite Woman (2 Kings 8:1–6)**

1. This is the final discussion of Elisha's miracles before the appointments of Hazael and Jehu (see 1 Kgs 19:15–18). It seems rather insignificant after the complex and engaging story we have just read. Why has it been selected to stand in this place? What is being emphasized?
2. What does 2 Kings 8:1 tell us about the nature of Elisha's ministry?
3. What attitude does the woman manifest in 2 Kings 8:2. How does it contrast with what was reported in 2 Kings 7:17–20?
4. What does 2 Kings 8:4 convey to us about the king? Has his attitude toward Elisha changed? What about his attitude toward Yahweh? How do we do similar things?
5. What might the inclusion of Gehazi here be intended to convey to us?
6. What is the overall point of the story?



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## **2 KINGS 8:7–9:14**

*Two Appointments*

Background: For one period, there were two kings ruling Judah and Israel with the same name: Jehoram. Jehoram of Judah began to reign in the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel (8:16; see 3:1) and reigned during eight calendar years. To help to differentiate between them here, the Hebrew shortens the name of the Israelite king to Joram while retaining the full form Jehoram for the Judean king. The overlap is another evidence of how closely connected the two kingdoms had become during the Omride dynasty in the north.

### **The Appointment of Hazael of Syria (2 Kings 8:7–15)**

1. Reread 1 Kings 19:15–17 and notice that God gave Elijah three commands to be fulfilled. During his lifetime he fulfilled only the third. Now look at 8:7 and 9:1–2. Why did not Elisha need a command from Yahweh to do these two things? What does this say about the ministry of Elijah and Elisha?
2. Like Ahaziah, Ben-Hadad is consulting the representative of a foreign God concerning his illness. What previous events might have inclined Ben-Hadad to do this with Elisha?
3. Why did Elisha give Hazael a double response? Was the first untrue as regards the illness?
4. Notice that Elisha does not direct Hazael to do what he later did to Israel. He only reports what he sees. Note the exact nature of Hazael's response in 8:13. What does he not say?
5. Why did God bring this event to pass? What had Israel's behavior been? (Remember Elijah's complaint in 1 Kings 19.)

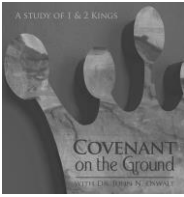
## Two Kings of Judah (2 Kings 8:16–29)

1. That Jehoshaphat would give his son the same name as Ahab would give his son is one indication of how closely the Judean had allowed himself to become allied with the ungodly Israelite royalty. But far worse was his permitting the marriage of his son to Ahab's daughter Athaliah. We do not know that her mother was Jezebel, but Athaliah's later actions seem to reflect Jezebel's decisiveness. How do we guard against compromise while continuing to live in the world?
2. Not only does Jehoram not walk in the ways of David, he walks in the ways of the kings of Israel. Yet God is not willing to call a halt to the Davidic dynasty. Why not (v. 19)? But why was this promise so important to Yahweh?
3. Remember that Moab had successfully revolted against Jehoram of Israel (2 Kgs 3). Now Edom succeeds in breaking away from Judah (20–22). What is happening in the larger picture of Israel's history?
4. Remember that between them Asa and Jehoshaphat had ruled Judah for 66 years. Now Jehoram would rule for just eight years and Ahaziah only one. Ahaziah died by violence, but Jehoram apparently died of natural causes at age 40. What are your reflections on these facts?
5. The alliance between Israel and Judah had never turned out well for Judah (1 Kgs 22:29–36, 48–49; 2 Kgs 3), and now it was to take a mortal turn. Having been in battle at Ramoth-Gilead with Joram (2 Chr 22:5–6), and Joram having been wounded, Ahaziah went to Jezreel to visit Joram. Suppose he had not been with Joram?

## The Anointing of Jehu (2 Kings 9:1–13)

1. Why do you think Elisha did not go personally to anoint Jehu?

2. Why did Elisha instruct the messenger to run when he had done the anointing?
3. What about the messenger's speech (2 Kgs 6–10)? Elisha is not reported to have said that. What seems to have happened? (Notice where the messenger came from, v. 1.)
4. Notice the cause of the destruction of the dynasty (v. 7). Was this the only reason?
5. What are the limitations on Jehu's mandate (vv. 8–10)?
6. Why the instant response of Jehu's officers (v. 13)?



# COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

## **2 KINGS 9:14–10:36**

*Jehu and the Destruction of the Omride Dynasty*

Background: Zimri (9:31), a chariot commander under the generalship of Omri, had treacherously killed his king, Elah (1 Kgs 16:9–10). Jezebel accuses Jehu of the same thing.

- Although kings in the ancient world were expected to father many children as a sign of their potency, the number 70 (10:1) is possibly not literal, but as a factor of 7 x 10, a way of saying “very many,” “an abundance.”
- It is not clear why the point is made of the inclusion of Jonadab of Recab in the trip to Samaria. Perhaps it is because he established a covenant to which his family remained deeply committed, while many of the Israelites had broken theirs (see Jer 35:1–11).
- Jehu would have the longest dynasty in the northern kingdom (10:30). That it was a gift from Yahweh, as the Bible says, is the best explanation for that fact.
- Possibly Hazael’s success on the east side of the Jordan (10:32–33) resulted in part from Jehu’s killing anybody who had anything to do with Ahab, including his military personnel?

## **The Deaths of Joram, Ahaziah and Jezebel (2 Kings 9:14–37)**

1. What do Jehu’s actions as reported in 9:14–20 tell us about Jehu and his character?
2. Why do you think the messengers joined Jehu and his troops (17–20)?
3. Why do you think Jehu explained his actions in reference to Jezebel (22)? What does this say about Jehu’s understanding of his mission?
4. Again, what do Jehu’s words in verses 25 and 26 say about his understanding of his mission (note also v. 36)?
5. Was the killing of Ahaziah authorized by God? What are we beginning to see in Jehu?

6. What do Jezebel's actions (vv. 30 and 31) tell us about her character?

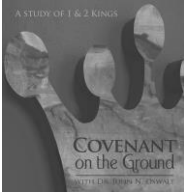
## **The Deaths of Ahab's Family and Associates (2 Kings 10:1–17)**

1. Why didn't Jehu simply go and attack Samaria? What does this tell us about the authenticity of the narrative?
2. Why did the officials in Samaria react as they did?
3. What is the point Jehu is making in verses 9–10? What is the expected answer to "who killed all these?"
4. Were those in verses 11–14 part of Jehu's mandate? When does doing God's will cease to be doing God's will? (Look up Hosea 1:4, written some 75 years later.) How do we avoid this same trap?

## **The Destruction of the Baal Temple (2 Kings 10:18–35)**

1. What does the destruction tell us about Jehu's commitments?
2. Why did Jehu deceive the Baal-worshippers about his true intent?
3. Why were the Baal-worshippers so enthusiastic in joining the celebration?

4. What is the significance of the complete destruction of the temple, and of the stone and the desecration of the property? What are its implications for us?
5. Why did Jehu not destroy the golden calves (29)? Was that really a practical option? What would it have entailed for Yahweh's worship in Israel?
6. Compare 10:31 with Deuteronomy 10:12–13. What does it mean to live out Yahweh's instructions with a whole heart?



# COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

## **2 KINGS 11:1–13:9**

*Joash and Jehoahaz*

Background: Notice that although Athaliah ruled for seven years, nothing is said about her reign. Clearly, to the writer she is a usurper, and so does not receive an accession notice or a death notice, like all the other kings.

We see something of the continuing weakness of Israel in that Hazael was somehow able to get from his capital at Damascus across the Jordan, through Israelite territory, and attack the Philistine city of Gath and then Jerusalem. See 13:7.

### **Crowning Joash (2 Kings 11:1–21)**

1. Why did Athaliah want to kill her own grandchildren? What does this tell us about the hostility of the world to Biblical faith?
2. Why was Jehosheba determined to save the little boy? What does this tell us about dedication to the faith?
3. Why such careful preparations for the announcement of the new king? Why didn't Jehoiada "just trust God"?
4. What risk did the people and the guards run by proclaiming a seven-year-old boy king? Why were they willing to do it? What about us?
5. Notice that Jehoiada is very "hung up" on covenants. He made one with the guards, now he has the king and the people make one with one another, and also one with God. What is the meaning of this?

6. Why did the people immediately go and tear down the temple of Baal, and why had they not done it sooner?

## **Repairing the Temple (2 Kings 12:1–16)**

1. Why do you think so much space is given over to this discussion of repairing the Temple?
2. Why so much discussion of the problems in getting the Temple repaired?
3. Why didn't the priests use the money for the Temple repairs? Intentional? Unintentional?
4. Why did the problem only become clear in Joash's 23<sup>rd</sup> (!) year?
5. What is the significance of taking the priests off the job and putting other workmen on it?
6. Why is the point made that no accounting was necessary?
7. How does all this apply to us?

## Hazael and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 12:17–13:9)

1. What is the irony of 2 Kings 12:17–18 in the light of what was reported in 12:1–16? Why did the Lord permit this? Look up 2 Chronicles 24:17–25. Why doesn't Kings include this information?
2. Why didn't the assassins make one of themselves king, but instead put Joash's son on the throne?
3. 2 Kings 13:3 explains why God allowed Hazael to have power over Israel? Why would God use an arguably more wicked person than the Israelites (see 2 Kgs 8:12) to punish them?
4. What does 2 Kings 13:4–5 tell us about Jehoahaz? What does this say about Jehu's potential influence? What do they tell us about Yahweh? But what does verse 6 tell us? What evidence of a similar situation do you see in America today?
5. We do not know for certain who "the deliverer" of verse 5 is, but it is probably a reference to the Assyrians who attacked Syria from the east. What does this tell us of Yahweh's mastery of history?
6. Why do you think the point is made about the decimation of Israel's military power in verse 7?







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