

# Monday - Week Twenty-four

## Lesson Sixty-nine: Ahab's Persistence in His Sin

Read: 1 Kings 19, 21, 22; 2 Kings 9

**Summary:** It seemed that Israel had completely fallen away from the Lord. Yet God had a remnant whom He kept faithful.

### Background and Comments

- Elijah had been on a spiritual high. The prophets of Baal had been killed, the rainstorm the Lord sent would soon end the drought and he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to the palace. No doubt Elijah expected the nation to turn around quickly! Jezebel soon dispelled those dreams by threatening Elijah's life. Elijah reacted in despair and ended up wishing to die because he thought he had failed as a prophet. When God came to him in a whisper instead of the fire, earthquake and wind He was teaching His prophet that it was the Gospel (the "weak" whisper) that would truly change people's hearts.
- Ahab showed that he was a spoiled child when he couldn't get Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel showed that she was a manipulative, powerful and sinful woman when she secured the vineyard for her husband. We marvel at Elijah's bravery as he stood before Ahab and confronted him with this sin.
- Jezebel thought that she could overwhelm Jehu with her fine clothing and make up. Jehu was much too focused and dedicated for that.

### Lessons for Today

- Often we fall into sin after times of spiritual strength (as Elijah did). Perhaps this happens because we begin looking to ourselves instead of the Lord. Remember that good times are often the most dangerous of all when it comes to temptation.
- God cannot be mocked. Ahab and Jezebel died horrible and dishonorable deaths ... and deserved to die in those ways. The world has gotten more complicated and sophisticated since then ... but it's still true that God cannot be mocked.

**Read:** Psalm 116; Luke 8.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, encourage me as You encouraged Elijah. Remind me that You have things in control. Give me courage as You gave to Elijah as he stood against the evil king and queen. When people say or do evil things let me stand up to them. In Jesus' name; Amen.

## Tuesday - Week Twenty-four

### Lesson Seventy: Elijah, the Successor to Elijah

Read: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2 and 4

**Summary:** Elisha received the full measure of Elijah's power and went on to do great things on the Lord's behalf.

#### Background and Comments

- When Elijah threw his coat on Elisha, Elisha wanted to go back to say good-bye to his parents. Elijah replied, "What have I done to you?" In other words, Elijah was saying, "Being a prophet is going to be difficult. Have you counted the cost?"
- Elisha would not let Elijah alone because he wanted to be with the prophet when God took him to heaven. Elisha showed that he was faithful to Elijah and to the Lord.
- When Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's power he was not asking to be twice as faithful or powerful as Elijah. "Receiving a double portion" was a phrase that had come to mean a full measure. Elisha wanted to be the true successor to Elijah.

#### Lessons for Today

- It seems at first glance that God's judgment against the youths who made fun of Elisha was too harsh. (After all, what's so bad about calling someone "baldy"?) Several points need to be made:
  1. These youths could easily have been 20 years old.
  2. They said "Go on up" to Elisha ... probably meaning, "Why don't you fly up to heaven like Elijah did. You are of no use here."
  3. Elisha called down a curse "in the name of the Lord". These young people were not only mocking Elisha they were mocking God.

Making fun of people seems to be a harmless and enjoyable pastime. God teaches us that it is a sin ... a serious sin against God.

- The story of the Shunammite woman is a story of miracles and grace. Think through the story again and pick out all the examples of God's grace that you can. Think through the last week and do the same.

**Read:** Psalm 117; Luke 9.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, keep me faithful and focused ... just as You did for Elisha. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

# Wednesday - Week Twenty-four

## Catechism Review

Read Questions 177-193

1. How is Jesus your Prophet, Priest and King? (Be specific)

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2. Jesus ransomed you from the power of sin and the devil. In other words, He freed you from sin and made it possible for You to please God (it's impossible for an unbeliever to please God). When you are tempted you can say to yourself, "Jesus died for me so that I don't have to fall into this sin. I can do the right thing." What obstacles do you face in doing the right thing?

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3. Jesus gave His life for us - we have heard that so often that it loses its punch. Read one of the accounts of Jesus' death (at the end of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) slowly and thoughtfully. What new insights or impressions did you have?

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4. Jesus' death allows us to face death with confidence. Do you ever think about your death? Unless judgment day comes first you will die. Have you ever prayed about the kind of death you will have? What would you pray?

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**Read:** Psalm 118; Luke 10.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus for us. Amen.

# Thursday - Week Twenty-four

## Lesson Seventy-one: Divine Healing for Naaman

Read: 2 Kings 5

**Summary:** Naaman experienced God's grace because of a little girl who was not afraid to confess her faith.

### Background and Comments

- Naaman and the Aramean king were superstitious. They thought that Elisha would be under the control of the king of Israel and that expensive gifts could secure the prophet's help. Israel's king disappoints us because he doubted instead of confidently going to Elisha for help.
- Naaman's confession was complete; he said that there was no other God but the God in Israel. His superstition had been killed; he was now a believer in the true God.
- Contrast the natural expression of the servant girl's faith and the selfishness of Gehazi.

### Lessons for Today

- The Israelite servant girl was acting "naturally" when she told her master's wife about Elisha. Naaman needed healing and Elisha could grant that healing. Do you act that naturally? When you encounter someone who needs to hear good news do you tell them the best news of all? When you see someone who feels guilty do you tell them who can get rid of that guilt for them. Witnessing is not complicated; it simply involves telling people what they need to hear.
- What a sight it must have been to see the powerful and wealthy Naaman standing in front of Elisha's humble home. Elisha didn't even go out to see Naaman! God was trying to humble Naaman ... and in the end it worked! How does God humble you?
- Naaman told Elisha that his position required him to attend dedication services with the king (in a heathen temple). Elisha told him to go in peace. A similar situation today might be attending a funeral service or wedding in another church. We are not confessing that we believe the same things as the members of that church.

**Read:** Psalm 119:1-8; Luke 11.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, the little girl who shared her faith with Naaman is the hero of this Bible account. She did such a simple thing but it greatly impacted Naaman's life. Lead me to share my faith with those around me. In doing so their lives could be changed for eternity. Amen.

# Friday - Week Twenty-four

## Life Questions

**Topic/Question:** I hear over and over again that sex before marriage is sinful. The church never seems to talk about sex inside of marriage. What does the Bible say about sex and marriage?

### Bible References and Considerations

- The Bible says that sexual intimacy is one of the biggest blessings God gives us in marriage. In fact, the Bible is remarkably clear about how this gift from God is supposed to work! Here is some sexual advice from the Bible:
  1. Sex is great! When is the last time you read Song of Solomon? Did you know that Jewish men were not allowed to read this book until they got married because of its graphic nature? Try reading this erotic love poem together with your spouse. In fact, read it in bed.
  2. Please the other person. St. Paul's sexual advice is found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. Your body does not belong to you alone - it also belongs to your spouse! Do you know what is sexually pleasing to your spouse? Do you talk about it?
  3. Sexual intimacy begins the minute you get up in the morning. God says that when a husband and wife get married they become "one flesh". God wants husbands and wives to be thinking about each other all day long. A phone call at lunch time, a kiss before going to work, a hug or intimate touch before getting out of bed in the morning are all expressions of that God-ordained oneness. Someone once said that sexual intimacy starts in the morning and builds up until it explodes in bed at night.

### Practically Speaking

- Martin Luther once wrote, "When I look at all the women in the world, I find none of whom I could boast as I boast with joyful conscience of my own. This one God Himself gave to me, and I know that He and all the angels are pleased when I hold fast to her in love and fidelity." It's not stretching what Luther meant to say that when you have sex with your husband or wife God is very pleased. That is one of the reasons He gave you a spouse in the first place. Married couples, go ahead and get busy pleasing God! (And who said that pleasing God is a drag?!?)

**Read:** Psalm 119:9-16; Luke 12

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, bless the marriages in our congregation. Amen.