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Dear Associates and Friends,

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“[Israel and Judah: 22. Evil Kings of Israel](#)” is the title of this month’s article. The text is exclusively from the Book of First Kings chapters 16 to 18, with no information from or reference to events in the Book of Second Chronicles or any other biblical book. The story deals with four kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel. King Asa of Judah is mentioned only by referral to years of his reign.

The entire article involves the evils that the kings do to reject YHWH and worship pagan gods. When King Ahab and his lovely wife Jezebel come on the scene, a struggle begins between Baal worship and worship of YHWH. In fact, Jezebel later works to exterminate all worship of YHWH from her sphere of influence. She does not succeed. One aspect of idolatrous pagan religions presented may surprise you, believers in such religions are not just wrong, they are vicious and even deadly.

### *Cast of Characters: Four Evil Israelite Kings*

1. King Elah of Israel is alive at the beginning of the article. His reign is ending.
2. King Zimri of Israel seizes the throne from Elah, but rules only for 7 days.
3. King Omri of Israel and the people seize the throne from Zimri. Omri rules for 12 years.
4. “King” Tibni struggled with Omri for the throne of Israel. After 4 years Tibni was killed.
5. King Ahab of Israel inherits the throne from his father Omri. He rules for 22 years.

All were sinful and evil kings except Tibni; we are not given a moral evaluation of him.

### *The god Baal*

The god Baal, and its religion of Baalism, are in the background of much of this month’s article. The golden calf worship begun by Jeroboam, the first dynastic king of Israel, became identified with the god Baal. Israel should never have violated their basic covenant agreement with YHWH and worship other gods. They did so with a fervor they rarely exhibited toward YHWH. Such is the power of sinful flesh.

Idolatry (and Baal was the fashionable god at this time) destroyed both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah.

**“Its prominence in Canaan and Phoenicia is especially important for understanding 1, 2 Kings, since it is from those cultures that the major influence on Israel and Judah came. M. Smith concludes that ‘the Phoenician baal of Ahab and Jezebel was a storm-god. The extrabiblical evidence indicates that the baal of Carmel and Baal Shamem were also storm gods.’ Thus, Baal worshippers believed that their god made rain, which is a quite important detail in an agricultural community. Elijah apparently prays for a drought to prove that Yahweh, not Baal, is in charge of crop-enriching rains.”<sup>1</sup>**

Remember, as you read the article, the storm god Baal is the bringer of rain. Elijah the prophet announces YHWH will withhold rain for 3 years and 6 months. The drought affected the northern Kingdom of Israel, Phoenicia, and likely the southern Kingdom of Judah as well. In fact, it may have covered most of the

<sup>1</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 210.

Mediterranean basin as well as the entire Near East.

For some reason Israel with their idolatry seemed to ignore completely all warnings, all punishments, until they were swept away into exile. Yes, Israel will be restored as the apostle Paul says,

**“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’ As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”**

• *Romans 11:26–28, KJV (quoting Isaiah 59:20–21)*

### ***Other Characters in the Article You Will Meet***

- On page 6 of the article Elijah the Prophet is introduced. Little is known about his background, but he appears suddenly giving a warning and a prophecy to King Ahab. Elijah’s life is immediately in danger.
- A man named Obadiah serves as chief of the household of King Ahab’s palace, yet he is an undercover worshipper of YHWH and protector of His prophets, as opposed to the pagan prophets of Baal and Asherah. A revelation of that fact could get him killed.
- A poor Gentile widow shows great faith under tremendous stress brought on by the drought and famine. She worships YHWH more faithfully than those in covenant with YHWH in Israel and Judah.

### ***Contribution Receipts for 2016, a Final Announcement!***

I want to remind you one more time to request a receipt for contributions, if you want us to send you one. We do not send receipts unless asked to do so. We will send it to you in a timely manner. We will send you receipts at any time, but this is the last time we will remind you.

### ***Thank You***

Why is our flesh so weak that we sin so easily and seemingly worship anything but God? Interesting isn’t it? Even when we try to do good, we most always end up like the disciples of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, our flesh weak even when the spirit is willing (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). We have weak flesh so that through God and Christ we can overcome that weakness we each have.

**“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”**

• *Romans 8:2–4*

After their return from exile, Israelites stopped outright idolatry and worship of other gods (Hebrews 10:15–17). On our part, we under grace do not worship other gods blatantly. Our gods are more covert, and we think we can ignore God. This occurs because God is extremely gentle with us in this period of grace.

**“Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”**

• *Romans 8:26*

Thank you for blessing us to provide useful, insightful, and interesting biblical information designed to lead you into God’s word. God communicates with each of us at this time through His written word, nuanced through His Spirit communing with our spirit. The result is this, **“The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”** (Romans 8:16). Thank you for helping us serve you.

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