



THE VOICE OF GOD IN 1-2 KINGS

STUDY GUIDE
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I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

a. The Word of the Lord is Jesus

- i. 1 Kgs. 19:9: "There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"
- ii. Gen. 15:1, "the word of the Lord came to him [Abram] in a vision."
- iii. 1 Sam. 3:21: "And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD."

b. The Word of the Lord governs the world

- i. The message of 1-2 Kings is not that Israel had a succession of good and wicked kings but that God is the true King who governs lesser kings in accordance with His Word—both written and prophesied.
- ii. God created the world by His Word; He governs it by His Word too.
- iii. Prophecies direct the rise of kings and fall of tyrants, the endurance of dynasties and also their termination, poverty and prosperity, sickness and health, life and death—even the manner of death (dogs licking blood and multiple deaths-by-lion)—both for Jews and Gentiles.

c. The Word of the Lord endures forever

- i. Many prophecies require decades/centuries for fulfillment:
 1. Josh. 6:26; 1 Kgs. 16:34: Jericho/1st/youngest (530 years)
 2. 1 Kgs. 13:2; 2 Kgs. 23:15-20: Rise of Josiah (300+ years)
- ii. Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:24: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."
- iii. If a word has been tested—hold onto it—even if it takes a long time.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

a. Prophecy includes both foretelling and forthtelling, but especially the latter

- i. Foretelling means telling the future; forthtelling means calling out sin, especially among powerful people.
- ii. The bulk of prophecy in 1-2 Kings (and the OT) is forthtelling. We have no evidence that this has changed. On the contrary, Jesus emphasizes that true prophets are hated for proclaiming hard truths.
- iii. Luke 6:22-23, 26: "Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets... Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."
- iv. The mark of a true prophet is being hated; the mark of a false prophet is being loved.

b. Prophecy can be learned

- i. Prophets gathered in communities to learn from prophetic mentors (2 Kgs. 2:1-15; 6:1-2; cf. 1 Sam. 10:5-6, 10-11; 19:20-24).
- ii. Those learning are called "sons of the prophets" because—"like father like son"—they emulated their prophetic mentors.

- iii. Their prophetic gatherings were characterized by a contagious presence of the Holy Spirit that multiplied prophets and prophecy (Num. 11:25-30; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10-11; 19:20-21, 23-24).

c. Prophecy can be abused

- i. Anywhere that power exists, it can be abused. This is true whether the power is political, positional, financial, legal, relational, or spiritual.
- ii. To speak for an all-powerful God gives one tremendous power over people. Therefore, prophecy can both severely abuse people (1 Kgs. 13:18-24) and powerfully bless them (1 Kings 17:8-16).

d. Prophecy, if tested, must be obeyed

- i. Scripture is universally binding on the conscience, but spontaneous prophecy can only bind an individual's conscience (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:19-21).
- ii. Examples of conscience-binding prophecy:
 - 1. A prophet disobeys his own prophetic word and suffers death-by-lion (1 Kgs. 13:18-24).
 - 2. Elisha predicts an economic boon, but a prophetic naysayer does not experience it and dies instead (2 Kgs. 7:1-20).
- iii. The greater the clarity of a prophetic word, the greater the accountability. God often clarifies prophecies through repetition.
 - 1. **1 Kgs. 11:9:** "And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." See 1 Kgs. 3 and 9.
 - 2. **2 Kgs. 17:13-14, 18:** "Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your fathers and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.' 14 But they would not listen and were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God... 18 Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only."

e. Prophecy can be conditional

- i. Some prophecies are unconditional, like Pharaoh's dreams: "And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about" (Gen. 41:32).
- ii. Prophecies are typically conditional, like Isaiah's revelations for Hezekiah—first that he will die and then that he will survive.
 - 1. **2 Kgs. 20:1:** "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover.'"
 - 2. **2 Kgs. 20:5-6:** "Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: 'I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life.'"
- iii. Principal of conditionality: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and that nation does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it" (Jer. 18:7-10).
- iv. Conditional prophecy does not exist because God changes; it exists because God wants a friendship with people who change.

III. EXPERIENCING PROPHECY

a. It is godly to inquire of the Lord through prophecy (in a godly way)

i. Examples:

1. **1 Kgs. 22:5-8:** "5 And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, 'Inquire first for the word of the Lord...' 7 But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?' 8 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah the son of Imla, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.'"
2. **2 Kgs. 3:11:** "But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?'"
3. **2 Kgs. 22:13:** "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

- ii. Ahab displays wickedness by inquiring of *false* prophets a message he wants to hear (1 Kgs. 22). Jehoram displays wickedness by not inquiring through *any* prophets (2 Kgs. 3). Jehoshaphat and Josiah display their righteousness by inquiring of God through true prophets and without manipulation (1 Kgs. 22; 2 Kgs. 22).

b. Prophetic impartation is a thing

i. Elijah imparted his prophetic anointing to Elisha.

1. **2 Kgs. 2:9-10:** "9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.' 10 And Elisha said, 'Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.'"
2. **2 Kgs. 2:15:** "Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him"

ii. Other examples of impartation:

1. **Luke 9:1:** "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases."
2. **Rom. 1:11-12:** "11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."
3. **1 Tim. 4:14:** "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you."
4. **2 Tim. 1:6:** "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

- iii. If the examples of Moses/Joshua, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus/apostles, Paul/Timothy are illustrative, impartation works best in the context of discipleship relationships.

c. Pray for discernment of spirits

- i. Something like the gift of "discernment of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10) appears in 2 Kgs. 6:17 when God reveals an angelic army to Gehazi after Elisha prays, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see."
- ii. The gift of discernment of spirits enables one to see into the spiritual realm, perceiving angelic and demonic activity.

- iii. Discernment of spirits is distinct from appearances of spiritual beings. The former enables us to see into their realm; the latter occurs when they appear to us in our realm.

IV. DELIVERING PROPHECIES

a. Props, parables, and signs can be helpful for significant words

i. *Props*:

1. Ahijah rips off ten pieces of a robe to illustrate tribes (1 Kgs. 11); Elijah has Elisha throw a cloak over him to signify the passing of the prophetic mantle (1 Kgs. 19:19-21); Elisha tells a man to strike the ground with arrows to illustrate victory (2 Kgs. 13:18-19); see also Agabus and the belt (Acts 21:10-11).
2. Props accentuate significant prophecies.

ii. *Parables*:

1. A prophet lets himself get struck to illustrate the king's disobedience in sparing Ben-Hadad (1 Kgs. 20:35-43); see also Nathan's prophecy about stealing a poor man's ewe to symbolize David's wife-theft (2 Sam. 12:1-7).
2. Parables bypass the resistance of hard hearts.

iii. *Signs*:

1. When a prophet's word won't be fulfilled for 300 more years, he offers a sign to confirm: the altar will be destroyed and ashes spilled on that very day (1 Kgs. 13:3-5).
2. Signs confirm that long-term prophecies will come to pass.

- iv. I have never used a prop, parable, or sign, but they boast a rich prophetic history and deserve consideration as the Spirit leads.

b. **Speak what God says—no more and no less**

- i. *Don't say more*: When the Shunammite woman suffers the loss of her child, Elisha does not force a prophecy: "the LORD has hidden it from me and not told me" (2 Kgs. 4:27).
- ii. *Don't say less*: When Ahab demands an encouraging word, Micaiah delivers the naked truth that he will die in battle (1 Kgs. 22:17-23).

V. APPLYING PROPHECIES

a. **Do what God says—no more and no less**

- i. *Don't do more than God says*: Jehu annihilates Ahab's house in fulfillment of God's word (2 Kgs. 10:30), but Hosea prophesies that Jehu went too far (Hos. 1:4), which probably refers to Jehu's annihilation of the relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah, which God never commanded (2 Kgs. 10:12-14)—probably for political reasons.
- ii. *Don't do less than God says*: Jehu's faithfulness is rewarded; however, the king fails to remove Jeroboam's idols (2 Kgs. 10:29).

- ##### b. **Do what God says with all your heart**. After obeying Elisha's prophecy about shooting an arrow—which represents victory over Syria—the king half-heartedly applies Elisha's prophecy about striking the ground with an arrow, which results in only a partial victory (2 Kgs. 13:15-19).