

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 17:17-24**

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18 She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" 19 But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." 24 So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth" (NRSV).

Kings provides a historical account of Israel's kingship. The books are a sequel to the history of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. They are books of both politics and theology. As such, they reveal details of how the kingship is regulated by the kingdom's devotion to the covenant. The role of the kings of Israel and Judah either contribute to the faithfulness of the people or deviation from the covenant. The theological lesson is that the welfare of the nation is directly dependent upon their degree of obedience.

King David was their most successful and beloved king. His son Solomon took over the rule at age 20. He lacked the wisdom that comes from years of experience. He prayed for wisdom to be able to discern between good and evil so he could govern the people. Since he prayed for the nation, not for himself, the Lord granted him wisdom. Solomon was called the wisest man on earth. He had kings and queens travel hundreds of miles just to meet him. They were dazzled by his brilliance and the prosperity of the nation. The golden age of Israel's history reached its apex under King Solomon. The Promised Land was secured in Israel's hands. The nation was at peace. They ate, drank, were happy, and successful. However, shortly after King Solomon's death, the kingdom split.

The history of Israel unfolds according to divine intervention. All of the kings of the northern kingdom were bad. Ahab was the 7<sup>th</sup> king of the northern kingdom Israel. Ahab married Jezebel, one of the most despised names in the Bible. She brought in foreign priests that worshipped foreign gods. Ahab did more evil than any king before him. Throughout its history, Israel is allowed to choose God or go in another direction. What will it be; good or evil? Since Israel chooses evil, God allows the consequences of their choices. Allowing consequences for your actions is a matter of justice and fairness. God gives the word to Elijah because God wants the people to repent and change. Elijah confronts Ahab and warns him that a drought is coming that is so severe that dew will not fall. This catastrophe is due to the nation because of the evil of Ahab and Jezebel. They worship false gods, killed the prophets of the Lord, refuse to listen to God's plan of intervention. God needs to protect the prophet and tells Elijah to flee out of Israel, head east and hide. He will drink from a dry creek and be fed by ravens. Then when the brook

dried up God sent Elijah to be fed by a widow. While he was there, the widow's son grew ill and died. She knows Elijah is a man of God but blames him for the tragedy. She mistakenly attributes this to sin. Elijah prayed to God and the boy was revived. This divine intervention confirms the prophet status of Elijah.

The title of the message is *Divine Intervention*, divine is of God and intervention is God taking action in the life of humanity. One of the overall big lessons of the Bible is that the welfare of Israel is in accordance with obedience to God. Prophecy is proven to be true as history unfolds and it gets recorded as scripture. God, out of love, provides guidance to the people to try to get them back into covenant. The covenant is like a marriage, it is a contract based on love. Several prophets went to several kings but most of the divine warnings fell on deaf ears. The reason for the exile was breaking the covenant. God warned several times starting before they entered the Promised Land. The kingdom progressively got worse. God did not cause the kingdom to get worse; pulling away from God brought the disaster. God brought security and economic prosperity to the kingdom and they denied God. As a consequence, God removes the reward. What God offers comes from love, otherwise it would be forced compliance and that is not love. A consequence of people making a wrong choice is disaster. Otherwise, the choice would not matter. With God there is a balanced equilibrium, make the right choice and you have prosperity, make the wrong choice and the result is failure and destruction.

Some interpret divine intervention as everything that happens is attributed to God. If a loved one dies then that opens the door to blame God for not coming to the rescue. Some interpret divine intervention as being specifically reserved for them. Selfish prayers are revealed by asking for no rain for my vacation while the farmer prays for rain to feed people. Which prayer does God answer? What if one person is more faithful and one person has a greater need? Does God choose who to please? Is God mean in deciding one life over another? I think God allows. Theology is the study of God. There is a segment of theology called theodicy. This deals with the aspects of divine intervention and justice. It studies why God allows good things to happen to bad people and bad things to happen to good people. Fate is a direct result of consequence that is based on decision and action but we must also accept the fact that some things just happen. God punishes sin with death and the way it is done is that everyone must die. The baby, toddler, or child with no chance to live did not die due to some sin and God does not punish you for a sin of your parents. A child dies because everyone dies. God selects the why – sin. Life selects the when and how.

Trust in God. Trust in Jesus. Thrust in the promise. Then when we are filled with trust, we can accept fate and we can accept divine intervention. It is God's choice to deal with humanity. How divine intervention is applied is up to God. In the mean time, you have to choose between God's way and the ways of the earth. God gives us reasoning for a reason. Our choice determines God's choice and divine intervention is a consequence of that choice.