



The Plans of God

1 Kings 19:1-18

There is a famous saying that goes... “Even the best laid plans go awry.” If ever people were tempted to think this was the case it would have been any faithful God-worshipping Israelites who lived in the days of the Kings. After many years of rebellion against God culminating in King Solomon being led astray by his wives to worship other gods, the *real* God has had enough and the Kingdom is torn from Solomon’s hands. The Northern Kingdom kept the name “Israel” and the Southern Kingdom took the name “Judah”. But things don’t get any better.

1 Kings 12-16 reads like a list of report cards for the Kings of Israel and Judah – and the summaries aren’t encouraging – especially for the kings of Israel. They are intent on rebelling against God and leading the people into idol worship. One king who gets a lot of “airplay” in 1 Kings is Ahab...

Read 1 Kings 16:29-33

1. List the key things we learn about Ahab in his “Report Card”

Read 1 Kings 18:16-21

At a time when there were only a handful of faithful Israelites remaining – those who didn’t bow the knee to the idols being supported by the Kings of God’s people – Elijah is sent by God to have a showdown with Ahab and his band of false prophets.

2. What does Elijah call on the people to do? Why do you think they respond the way they do?

God, of course, wins the famous showdown on Mount Carmel and the fickle crowd cheers for Elijah and God (18:39), but support for Elijah is short lived.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18

3. After all that Elijah has done, do you find his reaction to another threat in verses 1-5 a surprise? Why or why not?

4. Where does Elijah travel too? Does that ring a bell?

5. Is there anything else significant in Elijah's journey that gives you a sense of déjà vu?
(if not don't worry – just make sure you are there for the talk on Sunday!)

6. Why is Elijah full of despair? (v10)

Verse 12 is often taken out of context and taught as the secret method for hearing God – sit in silence and wait until you hear God's gentle voice speaking to you. But there's something far more important going on here than a lesson in listening. A better translation of "gentle whisper" or "still small voice" is actually a "crushed silence". The key is that the fire-storm passes and God hasn't spoken – and now there is a silence..... and then FINALLY God says something, but perhaps not what Elijah was expecting.

7. If Elijah is back where God made the covenant with his people - a covenant in which they were to love and obey him, a covenant which the people have broken - what might Elijah have expected God to do at this point?

8. What does God's command to Elijah in verses 15-18 tell us about his plans and purposes?

9. What things today might lead us to doubt that God is in control and that his purposes are going according to plan?

For all the failure of the Kings of God's people, God's plans and purposes have not failed. Because those plans culminate in King Jesus – the perfect, powerful and purpose-fulfilling King.

Read Revelation 19:11-16

10. Share with each other what we learn about Jesus and how knowing this great King should affect us in our daily lives, especially in the tough times when it seems God's plans are failing.