

### Prayer List

Gene  
Veda  
Wallace  
Sheila  
Ophelia

### Services:

#### Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.  
Assembly 9:50 a.m.  
Assembly 1:30 p.m.

#### Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

# Pinole Tidings

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### Elders:

Brad Behrens - [bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com](mailto:bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com)  
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### This Week's Question:

What king refused to let the Israelites pass through his country on their way to Canaan?

### Answer To Last Week's Question:

Deuteronomy - Deuteronomy 24:16

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## **Elijah: God's Man For Idolatrous Times**

Dennis C. Abernathy

After God dethroned Solomon, and the kingdom split, the northern tribes continued to be called "Israel" and the southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) were ruled by Rehoboam. Jereboam led the ten northern tribes, and developed an evil plan to keep from losing power to Rehoboam. He changed the central place of worship, setting up two golden calves in Bethel and Dan. He also "built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites"—a direct violation of God's commands (1 Kings 12:31).

Verse 32 says Jereboam "offered sacrifices on the altar ... sacrificing to the calves he had made." From this time on Israel was known for its corrupt rulers who caused the nation to err. Their character and history are summed up in the words: "*He did evil in the sight of Jehovah after the manner of Jereboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*" As wickedness gets worse and not better, by the time we come to Omri, it was said that "*he did worse than all that were before him.*" But it was Omri's son Ahab, who inaugurated a new species of iniquity, more revolting than any committed before. Of Ahab, it is written:

*"He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jereboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of*

*Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him” (1 Kings 16:31–33, NIV).*

Thus, there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the sin of Jereboam and that of Ahab. Whereas Jereboam viewed himself serving *Jehovah* under the symbol of the golden calf, Ahab *dethroned Jehovah* and replaced Him with Baal and Ashteroth, the gods of the Sidonians.

Of course, Ahab found Jezebel a most efficient and unscrupulous assistant. She had inherited both the religious fervor and the unscrupulous cruelty of her father, (who according to Josephus, murdered his own brother in order to gain the crown).

We must not overlook the fact that the Israelites, for the most part, were ready and willing for such idolatry. They accepted the priests of Baal at the king’s table (1 Kings 18:19), and were unmoved at the rebuilding of Jericho in defiance of the curse pronounced by Joshua (1 Kings 16:34; Joshua 6:26). It is not surprising then, that they easily gave outward homage to false gods, for their hearts had deserted *Jehovah* long before.

With this historical backdrop in mind, can’t you picture in your mind Ahab, king of Israel, and his wife Jezebel, sitting in their palace of luxury, congratulating themselves on their skillful maneuvering of Israel into the gross idolatry of Baal-worship, when as sudden as a deafening clap of thunder from a cloudless sky, there came in before them a hairy, weird-looking man with a leather girdle and a staff in his hand; and before they could ask him who he was, or why he was there, he said, *“As Jehovah the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.”* (1 Kings 17:1).

Thus, Elijah has a most vociferous beginning, breaking forth suddenly from the silence and just as suddenly vanishes. He comes without introduction and goes without warning. We know nothing about him prior to this startling “one-liner”

pronouncement before the wicked king and queen. We just know that the idolatrous times were fit for Elijah and Elijah was the right man for the times. He was a great prophet of God who arose out of obscurity, and his greatness is seen in his prominent mention in the New Testament. G.F Maclear said of Elijah: *“In the crisis of the Israelitish kingdom came forth, sudden as the lightning, alarming as the thunder, one of the most remarkable men Israel ever produced”* (*A Class-book of Old Testament History*, page 383).

The great prophet wore no court dress and spoke not in polished phrases, but he was faithful in his warnings and his threats were stern, and to the point. Out of obscurity he came, probably from humble beginning, to do God’s work at just the right time. William A. Taylor gives an apt description of this prophet of God and those like him.

*“The strongest trees are found, not in sheltered nooks, but in the most exposed places, where sweeps the full fury of the storm; the hardiest flowers grow, not in the hot-house, but on the mountainside, in close proximity to the glacier and the snow; and God’s grandest heroes are taken, for the most part, not from the lap of luxury or the home of affluence, but from the dwelling of penury and the abode of obscurity”* (*Elijah The Prophet*, page 10).

Today, perhaps we would not think of worshipping Baal, but are we just as guilty of a more subtle form of idolatry? When we exchange *“the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man”* (Romans 1:23), have we not *“exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served **created things** rather than the Creator”*? (verse 25).

Is it possible that we make our own personal needs, status and position, material possessions, recreation, T.V. and movies, our job, leisure time, etc. into our god? Are these things more important to us than God and His will? Have we pushed God off of His throne and replaced Him with these? May God raise up an Elijah to wake us up and call us back to Him!