

Understanding the Bible

How to Study the Bible

Volume 2: Intermediate Topics

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DRAFT

A Bible Study Guide

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The back cover caricature of the author was drawn by the well-known artist Jan van Haasteren as a favor to Els Rooswinkel, who maintained a web site dedicated to puzzles with artwork drawn by Jan. I originally created a version of this web site and handed it over to Els, who developed the site far beyond its initial content. In appreciation of my effort, Els asked Jan to draw me.

The latest edition of this e-book is available via <https://thechurchoforlando.org>.

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Preface

This draft has been made available in an incomplete form to provide the material that is referenced by completed study guides. Material not referenced might also appear in the draft simply because it is nearly complete. The content of this draft may not be fully developed nor polished.

Solving Mysteries

There will be a series of mysteries presented that are usually incorrectly explained. They demonstrate two things: (1) the answers are in the bible and (2) the teachers are not studying very well. Hopefully, these examples will encourage you to become the noble Berean of Acts 17:11.

1.1 What Did Ham Do?

As Noah and his family begin life after the flood, you encounter a strange story:

Genesis 9:18-27	
18	And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham [is] the father of Canaan.
19	These [are] the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.
20	And Noah began [to be] an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:
21	And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.
22	And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.
23	And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid [it] upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces [were] backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.
24	And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.
25	And he said, Cursed [be] Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
26	And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.
27	God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Just what did Ham do? What did Canaan do? He is mentioned 5 times!

You might find all kinds of strange answers from people as they picture the wrong things in their heads. Their explanations come from man's wisdom and they can sound correct to us. But the lesson to be learned is that scripture should contain your answer.

We need to get some terms defined:

- 1. uncovered (verse 21)
- 2. nakedness of his/their father (verses 22-23)

We will start with the first term. If you search for *uncovered*, you will get 17 results. You should read through those, but eventually you will need to conclude that you also want results for *uncover* as well. Now, there are 46 results.

I will show the passage of interest:

Leviticus 18:6-8	
6	None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover [their] nakedness: I [am] the LORD.
7	The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she [is] thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.



8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it [is] thy father's nakedness.

We are also seeing the second term, or phrase, here. The conclusion is this: "thy father's nakedness" can refer to "thy mother's nakedness". They were not to uncover it. We would think of that is simply seeing it. But that is not the answer. This verse clarifies it:

Leviticus 20:11

11 And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood [shall be] upon them.

"Uncovering a father's nakedness" means to lie with the father's wife (or, mother). Now, we are beginning to understand Ham's brothers' reactions and Noah's. Ham had sexual relations with his mother! It isn't clear if she was willing. Noah was drunk; perhaps his wife was as well, but we don't know anything in particular about her.

But, why all of the focus on Canaan? Let's see who he is:

Genesis 10:6

6 And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.

So, Canaan was Ham's son. But, he must be the son of Ham and his mother! Canaan would have always been a reminder of what Ham did. Just as Canaan came from a wicked choice by Ham, the Canaanites will be a wicked people making many bad choices. They will be Satan's people that will attempt to keep God's people out of the land that God desires.

1.2 Where Did Elijah Go?

It is a common teaching that Elijah went to heaven. Part of that teaching comes from this verse:

2 Kings 2:11

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, [there appeared] a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

This clearly says that he was taken into heaven. Most will teach that he was taken to the third heaven and did not die. Yet, this next verse contradicts that he went to heaven:

John 3:13

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of man which is in heaven.

The easy cop-out is to say that he didn't ascend himself since he was taken by a whirlwind. Since there are 3 heavens, we probably need to understand which heaven each verse is referring to. So, just where did Elijah go? This mystery can be solved with diligent study. It requires us to pay attention to a timeline.

Let's get some context concerning what happened to Elijah by looking at the entire passage:

2 Kings 2:1-15

- 1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.
- 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said [unto him, As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.
- 3 And the sons of the prophets that [were] at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know [it]; hold ye your peace.
- 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.
- 5 And the sons of the prophets that [were] at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know [it]; hold ye your peace.
- 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, [As] the LORD liveth, and [as] thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

- 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.
- 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped [it] together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.
- 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.
- 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: [nevertheless], if thou see me [when I am] taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be [so].
- 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, [there appeared] a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
- 12 And Elisha saw [it], and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.
- 13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;
- 14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where [is] the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.
- 15 And when the sons of the prophets which [were] to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

One particularly interesting detail appears in verses 3 and 5, where it says “the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day”. The is a very good hint as to what is going on.

In the next chapter, you read:

2 Kings 3:11-12

- 11 But Jehoshaphat said, [Is there] not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here [is] Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.
- 12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

So, instead of looking to get the word of the LORD from Elijah, they turned to Elisha. So, Elisha replaced Elijah. That is what “taking away thy master from thy head” was talking about. Of course, the thing that most people will say is that was because Elijah went to heaven.

If we back up in the chapter, we will get a timeframe for the events:

2 Kings 3:1

- 1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

The events of chapter 3 are in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat’s reign. So, the events of chapter 2, where Elijah was taken, occurred at that time or earlier. The *Jehoram* mentioned in verse 1 was a king in the northern kingdom. We are going to read of another Jehoram who was a king in the southern kingdom. So, don’t get confused.

Earlier in scripture, Jehoshaphat’s reign is summarized. He reigned 25 years:

1 Kings 22:42

- 42 Jehoshaphat [was] thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name [was] Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

His son Jehoram reigned after him. Again, this is a different Jehoram than mentioned previously.

2 Chronicles 21:1

- 1 Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

Oh boy, we have two different people named *Jehoram* to watch out for. Notice that we have jumped from *2 Kings* to *2 Chronicles*. The point of that is that you often get different details in different accounts (just like in *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*).

Now, during Jehoram’s reign, we read the following:



2 Chronicles 21:12-15

- 12 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,
- 13 But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, [which were] better than thyself:
- 14 Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods:
- 15 And thou [shalt have] great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

2 Chronicles 21:19-20

- 19 And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.
- 20 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

So, verse 12 says that Elijah has written a letter to pronounce God's judgment on Jehoram. This is probably near the end of his reign, perhaps 2 years prior as suggested by verse 19.

Figure 1.1 is a simple timeline that shows when Elijah was taken and when he wrote a letter. These events are about 13 years apart. He obviously came back to the earth to write the letter. We're going to see that he wasn't gone very long at all.

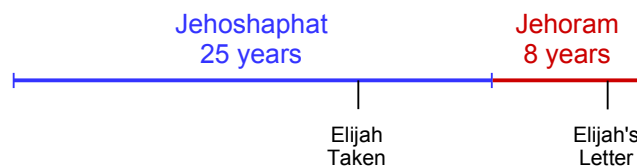


Figure 1.1: This is a simple timeline of important events concerning Elijah. Elijah is taken by a whirlwind to heaven in about the 18th year of Jehoshaphat's reign. Elijah writes a letter to Jehoram in approximately the 6th year of Jehoram's reign. So, Elijah returned to earth shortly after his departure.

Side Study 1.1: Being Carried Away by the Spirit

Let's see an interesting story in the old testament:

1 Kings 18:1-12

- 1 And it came to pass [after] many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.
- 2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And [there was] a sore famine in Samaria.
- 3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which [was] the governor of [his] house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:
- 4 For it was [so], when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)
- 5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.
- 6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.
- 7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, [Art] thou that my lord Elijah?

- 8 And he answered him, I [am]: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah [is here].
 9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?
 10 [As] the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, [He is] not [there]; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.
 11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah [is here].
 12 And it shall come to pass, [as soon as] I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and [so] when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

In the dialog that Elijah had with Obadiah, he told Obadiah to tell Ahab where he was. But Obadiah objected that Elijah might not be there when Ahab would come for him. Obadiah understood that Elijah (or any prophet) could be picked up by the Spirit of the LORD and carried to another place. The Spirit of the LORD is essentially the whirlwind seen here:

2 Kings 2:1

- 1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

This is also described as God's chariot in Ezekiel 1 and 10, and those are very complicated vision passages. The same thing happened to Philip here:

Acts 8:39-40

- 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.
 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

So, this whirlwind would carry a prophet into the 1st heaven to another location on the earth and set him down there. The new testament makes it clear that the prophet returned to the earth.

Elijah died like almost all other men in the old testament. As further evidence of this, Elijah appeared in the vision of the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-9. His presence in the vision suggests that he will be present in the kingdom after the resurrection.

1.3 What Was In the Ark?

We think we see contradictions in the bible because we don't have enough information. Consider this verse:

Hebrews 9:2-5

- 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein [was] the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;
 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein [was] the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Verse 4 says that there were three items in the ark. Let's compare that to this passage with several verses removed for simplicity:

1 Kings 8:2-4

- 2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which [is] the seventh month.
 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.
 4 And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that [were] in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up.



1 Kings 8:6

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy [place, even] under the wings of the cherubims.

1 Kings 8:9

9 [There was] nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made [a covenant] with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

The last verse says that there was only one of those items in the ark. The ark was taken into the *house*. This is what the *house* was:

1 Kings 6:17

17 And the house, that [is], the temple before it, was forty cubits [long].

So, the ark was taken into the temple after it was built in the time of Solomon.

So, why were two items missing? Was there a passage that we don't know about that says they were taken? One possible explanation is that these items were removed when the Philistines took the ark in 1 Samuel 5. But we would be guessing since nothing is said about it.

First, let's understand that the passage in *Hebrews* is referring to the tabernacle and not the temple. It is not claiming that they were still there in the time that *Hebrews* was written. But let's go back and find out why these things were put in the ark in the first place.

Exodus 16:32-34

32 And Moses said, This [is] the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

33 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.

34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

Manna was put in the ark as a testimony to those who were fed in the wilderness. God provided for the people even though they complained. Once they entered into the land, the manna stopped:

Joshua 5:12

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Evidently, here was no need for this testimony any longer.

Exodus 25:16

16 And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

Here, the tables of the covenant (called the *testimony* here) were put in. Those were still there in the time of Solomon. That testimony was meant to be kept.

Numbers 17:10

10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

Aaron's rod was kept as a testimony against those that rebelled in the wilderness. Evidently, this reminder was no longer necessary.

We should conclude that the priests or Levites understood that these things were not meant to be kept once in the land. We should also conclude that the bible has enough information to resolve contradictions. Whether or not you can persevere to find them is a different question.



Index of Bible Verses

This index of bible verses is provided so that you can quickly find where passages appear. The index is organized by book name. Each book name is followed by an ordered list of chapters, followed by the verse(s) cited. Each reference is followed by the page(s) on which it appears. In the soft copy, the page numbers are hyperlinks. Boldface page numbers, if any, refer to references to verses rather than quoted verses.

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