

1. Review of Israel's history so far: The Book of Judges: 1) 12 judges 2) Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson are significant. 3) Barak, Gideon and Samson are 3 most important judges. 4) Eli and Samuel are "swing figures" - overseeing the switch from judges to monarchy - God warned that a monarchy would not be good for Israel.
2. Samuel anoints Israel's first king, Saul. He starts out well, defeats the Ammonites and establishes his capital at Gibeah.
3. During this time 3 "offices" become preeminent in Israel:
Prophet - direction from God Priest - worship and sacrifice King - civil leadership
4. Prophets in the days following the judges - Samuel, Nathan, and Gad
5. Priests we have encountered - Eli, Abimelech, Abiathar, Zadok
6. Kings - Saul, who lost the kingdom for his son Jonathan by disobeying God; David in Hebron and Ishbosheth in Gibeon; David in Judah and finally all Israel, surviving the treachery of his son Absalom; Solomon, the son of Bathsheba, who was unsuccessfully challenged by his brother Adonijah.
7. David's exploits and Solomon wisdom were renowned, but both made serious mistakes. Solomon's sins have led to the division of the kingdom.
8. The kingdom has been together for 120 years, through the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon. Now it is divided: a. The Northern Kingdom - Ephraim, Israel b. The Southern Kingdom - Judah
9. God is sovereign - Man is responsible for his own actions
 - a. The kingdom is divided because of Solomon's sin, but Rehoboam his son bears guilt for the deed when it is done, through his own actions.
 - b. The elders give Rehoboam wonderful advice, which he refuses to take. Instead of being a servant leader as counseled, he is a tyrant - threatens the people with 'scorpions' - and a civil war erupts. 1) Biblical leadership is servant leadership. 2) People follow servant leaders.
10. The people responded to Rehoboam's tyranny by stoning Adoniram, the one in charge of forced labor, which now even extended to native Israelites.
11. Jeroboam accepted the invitation of the 10 tribes and becomes king of the Northern Kingdom, quickly moving them into idolatry. Not one king of Northern Israel was ever good. Jeroboam was afraid to have his people traveling to Jerusalem to worship God at the Temple. He did not trust God, even though the prophet Abijah told him God was giving him the throne. He defiled Israel's religion by building 2 golden calves and appointing anyone he chose as priest.
12. This period of history sees the office of prophet flourish. a. A prophet was also called "a man of God". b. An unnamed prophet confronts Jeroboam while he was worshipping at a pagan altar. c. He prophesies about a king named Josiah - who would live 300 years in the future. d. Delivering messages from God about the future was one aspect of the prophet's ministry, but not the main one. e. If a prophet's words did not come true, he was not a real prophet of God. f. Jeroboam knew this man was God's prophet; he got proof when his hand withered and the prayer of the prophet to God restored it. g. Jeroboam had proof, but he did not repent.

1. Orientation to the kings of Israel and Judah: Why should we learn the kings?
 - a) It will help us understand the context into which a great deal of the Old Testament is written - it will make it come alive.
 - b) It will sober us, because of the striking similarities between the environment in the Israel of that day and our own times.
 - c) We will better understand and appreciate Israel's prophets.

2. The Southern Kingdom of Judah: From the division of the realm under Rehoboam in 931 B.C., until Judah goes into captivity in Babylon in 586 B.C., there were 20 rulers in all.
 - a. 19 kings plus Queen Athaliah (wicked)
 - b. 8 were good, 12 were evil
 - c. All but 5 reigned for more than years, giving them more stability than the Northern Kingdom

3. Rehoboam: Reigned for 17 years, beginning when he was 41
Abijah: Reigned for only 3 years
Asa: Reigned for 41 years - He did 'good and not evil in the eyes of the Lord'.

4. Rehoboam's reign:
 - a. He angered the Lord - 'high places, sacred stones, Asherah poles and male shrine prostitutes' are all mentioned during the reign of Rehoboam, and all are part of the pagan religion of the Canaanites.
 - b. Rehoboam was unable to stand against the invasion of Israel by Egypt's king, Sheshonk I. He decimated the gold treasury of Solomon.
 - c. Israel and Judah were in a continual state of warfare during Rehoboam's reign.

5. Even though Abijah, Rehoboam's son was evil, God gave Abijah his son Asa to reign after him "for David's sake". The legacy of a righteous man or woman:
 - a. 3 generations after David, his great-great grandson is "a lamp in Jerusalem".
 - b. God makes Jerusalem strong.
 - c. Asa was a godly king, getting rid of idolatry and reviving the true worship of God.
 - d. His victory over the much larger Ethiopian army is significant - he does NOT seek a foreign alliance; instead, he prays.
 - e. His one failure was to make an alliance with Aram (Syria) against Israel. God rebukes him through the prophet Hanani, and he responds by putting Hanani in prison for a time; his other failure was to not completely remove the high places.

6. A challenging verse to learn and memorize: 2 Chronicles 16:9 - "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."
"The world is yet to see what God will do with the life of a man who is wholly committed to Him." (Moody or Booth quote) God is looking for people who will be committed.

7. The first kings of the Northern Kingdom, which existed from 931 B.C. to their captivity in 722 B.C.
 - a. 19 kings - all were evil
 - 1) Jeroboam - reigned for 22 years
 - 2) Nadab - ruled for just 2 years
 - 3) Baasha - led a military coup and killed all of Jeroboam's family; the prophet Jehu delivered God's message of judgment to him.

1. The focus of today's reading is on the Northern Kingdom, through the reigns of 4 more kings after Baasha.
2. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Baasha reigns for 24 years; his son Elah takes the throne and reigns for 2 years (like Nadab who Baasha murdered) and then Elah is murdered by Zimri and all of Baasha's family is destroyed.
3. Zimri reigns for 7 days and then commits suicide as Omri, the army's general, becomes king. It takes 3 years to secure the throne due to a civil war with a man named Tibni.
4. "Wickedness always begets even more wickedness." Jeroboam was a wicked man, but Baasha was even more wicked. Omri "sinned more than all those before him". But then comes Ahab, Omri's son, who did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any before him. Sin is progressive - it escalates - and will bring us to total ruin, apart from divine grace.
5. The rest of 1 Kings focuses on Ahab and a series of power encounters between him and Elijah - God's prophet - the "man of God."
 - a. Supernatural activity greatly occurred around 3 individuals in biblical history:
 - 1) The period of the exodus - a mighty work of redemption - Moses
 - 2) Elijah and Elisha - an extraordinary cluster of 15 miracles
 - 3) The life of Jesus Christ and the early church - the great work of redemption was completed
 - b. A "spirit-filled ministry may or may not be accompanied by miracles, as was the case with Isaiah. What occurs is up to God.
6. We know nothing of Elijah until he appears on the scene to tell Ahab that God would send no rain because of Ahab's wickedness until Elijah returns to release it.
 - a. Ahab blamed the messenger for the lack of rain.
 - b. The Word of God can make people mad when we bring it to them.
7. God took care of His servant Elijah.
 - a. Elijah delivered the message and God sent him into hiding.
 - b. The ravens feed him at the Brook Kerith.
 - c. God takes him to the widow of Zarephath, who is ready to receive him.
 - d. There the miracle of the continuance of the cruse of oil and bag of flour occurs.
 - e. Elijah prays and God raises her son back to life.
 - f. Elijah is a great prophet of God.

1. 1 Kings 18 and 19 - one of the great power encounters of all time - Elijah versus the prophets of Baal and Asherah. (It has a striking parallel in the encounter in Exodus 6-12 - Moses versus the gods of Egypt.) Elijah means "the Lord is my God."
2. Both in the drought itself and the contest on Mount Carmel, Baal is the target.
 - a. Baal was the storm god.
 - 1) He could not make it rain after 3 ½ years of drought.
 - 2) He could not provide lightning to light the fire when his servants prayed.
3. Elijah demands that the whole nation come to this contest. King Ahab is unhappy, but desperate, and he complies. He called Elijah "the troubler of Israel" when he, in fact, was just that.
4. Elijah sets the terms of the contest - he gives away every advantage:
 - a. He gives away the advantage of numbers...one versus 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophetesses of Asherah.
 - b. He gives away the advantage of specialization - Baal is supposed to "the storm god" with a specialization in lightning.
 - c. He gives away the privilege of priority - if Baal was able to answer, Elijah would never have had the chance to pray to God.
 - d. He gives them many hours to pray and cry out to Baal.
 - e. He gives the advantage of conditions - their dry wood ready to lit, against his wood soaked with water.
5. The prophets of Baal are unsuccessful. When Elijah finally prays a simple and confident prayer to God, fire immediately comes from heaven and consumes his sacrifice. It is a moment of transcendent triumph. "The Lord is God. The Lord is God", the multitude begins to chant.
6. Elijah was raised up by God as Ahab and Jezebel were not just adding other deities to the worship of the true God; they were attempting to completely replace the worship of Jehovah with pagan gods. This is what called our God's wrath against them.
7. Obadiah, Ahab's servant, was a secret worshipper of God, but Elijah was the only voice speaking out against Ahab's sin. He was a man of courage.
8. The call of God to our society is the same today as Elijah's call to his society: "If Baal is god then serve him, but if the Lord is God then serve Him and Him only."
9. After experiencing the great victory on Mount Carmel and seeing the people cooperate with him in ridding the land of the prophets of Baal and Asherah, Elijah gives into fear because of the threats made by Queen Jezebel. And he flees for his life.
10. God's ministry to Elijah in the cave is a gracious token of His love and concern for His servant. God is going to keep on using Elijah.

1. Surprise #1: God helps Ahab against the invading army of Ben-Hadad of Syria so that Ahab and his people “will know that Jehovah is the Lord.”

2. It illustrates the theology of the Lord’s long-suffering patience.
 - a. Psalm 103:8: “The Lord is compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love.”
 - b. 2 Peter 3:8, 9: “With the Lord a day is a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promises some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

3. God is dealing with both kings in a way that it totally consistent with his character. Jehovah is really God, the Lord of all the universe; He is giving both kings an opportunity to repent and acknowledge their dependence on the One True God.

4. Ahab’s list of sins is long, but God is still leaving opportunity for repentance. Ahab listens to the prophet’s advice in regard to Syria’s invasion, but does not carry out the sentence God has pronounced against Ben-Hadad.

5. Ahab’s totally unrepentant heart is exemplified in the story of the acquisition of Naboth’s vineyard. He is willing to murder to get what he wants. He is controlled by Jezebel. He is selfish, weak and depraved, but Jezebel is the driving force behind the hatred of God.

6. Elijah confronts Ahab and he again partially repents and God again exercises patience in judging Ahab.

7. Ahab represented a whole nation of people that God loved, thus His great patience with Ahab. But His patience must never be mistaken for weakness (Ecclesiastes 8:11 and Romans 2:4).

8. Surprise #2: God, the long-suffering One, is angry with Ahab for letting Ben-Hadad go. If Ben-Hadad had responded to what he recognized as divine intervention in the destruction of his first invasion army, he would not have been assigned to judgment - but he again attacked Israel - and Ahab had been assigned as his instrument of judgment.

9. Ahab disobeyed. He made a choice between obeying God and getting rich. He chose getting rich.

10. Surprise #3: Ahab humbles himself sufficiently, and God relents again and waits to bring disaster on Ahab’s house. If men and women repent, he will forgive. He is always consistent. Insincere repentance will show itself soon enough, and then the judgment of God will fall.