

Purpose

- Learn how the tribes of Israel were divided
- To learn about Elijah
- To learn about Elisha
- To learn about Hezekiah

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information

An undisciplined father produced an undisciplined son. Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, had been given every luxury growing up, and he wanted even more when he became king. The leaders of the clans of Israel gathered to crown Rehoboam as king, but there was rumbling in the ranks. The ten northern clans demanded tax relief. They couldn't continue to meet the heavy demands placed on them by the king. In a move only the stupidest political advisor would suggest, Rehoboam told them that he would increase his demands, not lessen them.

The ten tribes in the north refused to acknowledge Rehoboam as king and split off from the united nation. The disastrous split that took place that day was never mended. From this point on the nation was divided. Suddenly there were two kingdoms and two kings. It becomes far more difficult to follow what is happening. These facts might help.

The ten northern clans that split away were now called Israel. WOW!! How confusing. The whole nation was called Israel, now they are calling the northern part Israel. Once in a while you will hear it called Ephraim or Samaria.

The southern two tribes (Benjamin and Judah) were called Judah (because Judah was larger). The capital of Judah was Jerusalem.

The northern kingdom, Israel, lasted 209 years. Twenty kings from several different dynasties ruled Israel. All the kings of Israel were evil and refused to follow the Lord. Seven Israelite kings were assassinated; one committed suicide.

The southern kingdom, Judah, lasted 345 years. In Judah's history only eight of their kings were good. The others led God's people into idolatry and false worship.

ELIJAH

In the midst of the story of Ahab We learn of the prophet Elijah. Ahab and Jezebel had to contend with a fiery prophet named Elijah. Elijah appeared in Ahab's palace one day and announced that no more rain would fall on Israel until he said it would. Imagine the impudence of this hick from the hills of Israel! But for three and a

half years no rain fell. Finally, Elijah challenged the prophets of the god Baal to a contest of the gods on Mount Carmel! It's a spectacular story! Elijah was fiercely opposed to the worship of Baal, for he firmly believed that both the religious and the moral life of the people was being corrupted by the religious practice led by the priest/prophets of Baal and Asherah. So Elijah announced that the God Israel was calling Baal to a contest, a trial to see who was the most powerful. The contest was held on a mountain (Mount Carmel.) Elijah challenged Baal to provide the fire for a bull that was provided for sacrifice. The priests of Baal chanted, sang and danced for hours but nothing happened. So Elijah prepared his sacrifice, put wood under the bull (as the Baalites did), doused the bull and altar stoned. He then prayed and fire came from heaven, licked up the water and consumed the bull, wood and even the stones. The people then praised God and promised to worship him. Elijah executed all of the Baal priests right then and there.

This victory lasted only a little while. Within one day Jezebel sent Elijah a message that he would also be killed. Elijah feared for his life and ran to Beer-sheba. He lay down and prepared to die but God talked to him and told him to go on a journey to Mount Horeb (where Moses' revelations happened.)

At Mount Horeb God told Elijah that his mission was not over and he should return to his task. King Ahab was planning to take the vineyard from Naboth because Naboth refused to sell it to Ahab. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, falsely accused Naboth of treason and had him executed. Elijah condemned the deeds of the king, and Ahab had to learn that not even kings and queens can break God's rules.

Elijah had one more task to do; he had to designate Elisha to take over his job as prophet. Elijah did as God commanded and Elisha reported that he saw Elijah disappear up into heaven in a flaming chariot. Elijah spoke for God for about twenty years in Israel

ELISHA

Elisha was Elijah's successor. He was empowered by God to perform amazing miracles—a dead boy was revived to life, a man's leprosy was healed, and an iron axhead floated. Elisha's ministry lasted fifty years.

HEZEKIAH

You learn about Hezekiah in 2 Kings 2:1-8:15. Hezekiah was one of the most faithful kings ever to rule over the kingdom of Judah. He reopened the temple of God and he reestablished the true worship of the Lord in Judah. Many people who were loyal to the Lord in the northern kingdom of Israel migrated south to Judah during Hezekiah's reign. The prophet Isaiah played a prominent role in Hezekiah's kingdom. Hezekiah made a dramatic appeal to the Lord for protect from the Assyrian army, and God destroyed 185,000 Assyrians in one night!

Procedure

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- Do handout 46-1. We will give answers in class.
- Read Background Information on the tribes of Israel. Handout 46-2 as you are talking about the division of the northern tribes and the southern tribes so they can look while you are talking. Point out where these two areas are. Read background information on Elijah.
- Handout 46-3 will give you a bio of Elijah.
- Read background information on Elisha. While you are going over this check out handout 46-4.
- The handout 46-5 gives the miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha. .