

KING AHAB FOUGHT THE LORD; PROPHET ELIJAH FOUGHT FOR THE LORD

1 Kings 16:29 - 22:40; 2 Kings 9:30 - 10:17

Israel: Divided Kingdom

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel

Key-locations: Samaria, Jezreel

Key-repetitions:

- Ahab's sins: He married Jezebel, served Baal and built a temple for Baal (1 Kin 16:29-34); permitted the murder of Naboth (1 Kin 21:1-16).
- Miracles related to Elijah: predicted a prolonged drought (1 Kin 17:1); fire came from God on Mount Carmel (1 Kin 18:20-40); it rained in answer to his prayer (1 Kin 18:41-46); an angel fed him and he traveled 40 days and nights without eating (1 Kin 19:5-9).
- Ahab considered Elijah a troublemaker and his enemy (1 Kin 18:17-18; 21:17-29).
- Elijah spoke the Lord's words (1 Kin 17:1; 18:1-40; 21:17-24).

Key-attitudes:

- The evil of Ahab and Jezebel.
- Ahab sulking, upset and angry.
- The courage, solitude and depression of Elijah.
- Conflict between: Ahab and Elijah; Elijah and the prophets of Baal; Ahab and Ben-Hadad.

Initial-situation:

After King Solomon died, Israel assembled and requested for King Rehoboam to loosen up the harsh labor and the heavy yoke Solomon had put on them. Rehoboam answered with cruel words, saying he would be harsher than his father.

When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they abandoned Rehoboam and made Jeroboam king over all Israel. Rehoboam continued to rule the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, sinned by making idols. He sinned and caused the people to sin. All the kings of Israel followed the example of Jeroboam.

Initial-problem:

Ahab did more evil than any of the kings before him.

Final-situation:

Ahab, his wife Jezebel, and all their male descendants were killed, just as the Lord had promised through his prophet Elijah.

BIBLE STORY

Elijah During the Drought

King Ahab of Israel did more evil than any of the kings before him. He married Jezebel. He served Baal and built a temple for worshiping Baal in Samaria. Ahab made an idol to the sacred prostitute Asherah. He did more to provoke the Lord God to anger than did all the previous kings of Israel (1 Kin 16:29-33).

Prophet Elijah confronted Ahab and prophesied that the Lord God of Israel would send total drought for the next few years. The Lord provided food for Elijah during the three years of drought (1 Kin 17:1-16).

Elijah on Mount Carmel

Three years after Elijah had prophesied the drought, the Word of the Lord came to Elijah, "Go present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land." Elijah found Ahab.

Ahab saw Elijah and said, "So it is you, you troublemaker of Israel?"

Elijah replied, "You and your father caused trouble for Israel. You abandoned the Lord's

commands and now follow the Baals. Assemble everyone in Israel at Mount Carmel. Bring the prophets who eat at Jezebel's table, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the prostitute goddess Asherah" (1 Kin 18:1-19).

Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, especially the prophets, to Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the people, "How long will you try to serve both Baal and the Lord? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Nobody said a word.

Elijah spoke, "Get two bulls for us. Let the 450 Baal prophets butcher one bull and lay it on the wood, but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. Then you pray to your god, and I will pray to the Lord. The god who answers by fire, he is God."

The people agreed, "You have a good plan, do it!"

Baal's prophets took one of the bulls and prepared it. They called on Baal. They danced, shouted, and slashed themselves with swords and spears. They tried every religious trick they knew until the time for the evening sacrifice. But nothing happened.

Then Elijah called the people to approach him. He took twelve stones, one stone for each of the tribes descended from Jacob. He used the stones to build an altar in honor of the Lord, and he dug a ditch around it. He arranged the wood, butchered the bull and laid it on the wood. Then three times he ordered, "Fill four large jars with water and drench both the offering and the wood."

The water ran down around the altar and filled the ditch.

At the time for the evening sacrifice, Elijah went near the altar and prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, reveal to these people that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are giving these people another chance at repentance."

Immediately fire from the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and even the water in the ditch.

The people fell on their faces exclaiming, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"

Elijah commanded, "Seize the prophets of Baal! The people seized them, and Elijah slaughtered them (1 Kin 18:20-40).

Elijah ordered Ahab, "Hitch up your chariot and get down from the mountain before heavy rain stops you."

A heavy rain began to fall and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord enabled Elijah to run in front of Ahab's chariot until they reached Jezreel (1 Kin 18:41-46).

Elijah on Mount Horeb

Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done. Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, "By this time tomorrow I will make you as dead as those prophets" (1 Kin 19:1-2).

Elijah was terrified and ran for his life. He fled a day's journey into the wilderness. He collapsed in the shade of a broom bush and prayed, "Enough of this, Lord. Take my life!" Exhausted, he fell asleep under the lone broom bush.

An angel brought Elijah bread and water, and then let him sleep. The food gave Elijah strength to walk for forty days and nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There Elijah crawled into a cave and slept through the night (1 Kin 19:1-9).

The Word of the Lord came to him, "Go stand on the mountain in front of the Lord. The Lord will pass by."

A hurricane force wind ripped the mountains, but the Lord was not in the wind. An earthquake came, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. A fire came, but the Lord was not in the fire. Then came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his robe over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

A quiet voice asked him, "Elijah, why are you here?"

Elijah replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have abandoned your covenant, destroyed your altars, and murdered your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me."

The Lord said, "Go back the way you came. Anoint Jehu king over Israel, and anoint Elisha to succeed you as prophet. I have left 7,000 living in Israel whose knees never bowed down to Baal, and whose mouths never kissed his image" (1 Kin 19:10-18).

Elijah found Elisha plowing with a team of yoked oxen. Elijah threw his cloak around him. Elisha then took his pair of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people. Then he set out to follow Elijah (1 Kin 19:19-21).

Naboth's Vineyard

Naboth owned a vineyard that bordered Ahab's palace. Ahab asked Naboth to sell his vineyard.

Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should sell you the land that belongs to my family."

Ahab went home and lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. Jezebel his wife found him sulking. She said, "Cheer up! I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!"

Jezebel wrote letters over Ahab's signature ordering the leaders who lived in Naboth's city to stone Naboth to death.

The leaders in Naboth's city followed Jezebel's instructions. Jezebel told Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard that Naboth refused to sell you. Ahab went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

The Word of the Lord came to Prophet Elijah, "Go to King Ahab, who is now in Naboth's vineyard, claiming it as his own. Tell him, `The Lord says: You murdered Naboth and seized his property! The very spot where the dogs lapped up Naboth's blood, dogs will lap up your blood!"

Ahab told Elijah, "So you found me, my enemy!"

Elijah answered, "I found you, because you sold yourself to do evil, defying the Lord. The Lord says, `I will kill you and every male in your family because you provoked me to anger and caused Israel to sin. Now concerning Jezebel: Dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh by the wall of Jezreel" (1 Kin 21:1-28).

Ahab and His Family Killed

Ahab, king of Israel attacked the king of Aram at Ramoth Gilead. One of King Aram's soldiers shot an arrow that hit Ahab between the sections of his armor. Blood from his wound pooled on the chariot floor, and that evening he died. The king's body was brought to Samaria and buried. They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria and the dogs lapped up his blood. This happened just as the Lord had promised (1 Kin 22:29-40).

Ahab's son Joram became king of Israel (2 Kin 1:1-18).

Years later, Elisha replaced Elijah. One day Elisha sent a young prophet to Jehu, the commander of King Joram's army. The prophet poured oil on Jehu's head and declared, "The Lord God of Israel, says, `I anoint you king over the Lord's people Israel. Destroy the house of

Ahab your master. Everyone in Ahab's family will die. As for Jezebel, dogs will eat her carcass in the open fields of Jezreel. No one will bury her" (2 Kin 9:1-10).

Jehu's army officers blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!" (2 Kin 9:11-13).

Jehu got into his chariot and rode to Jezreel. King Joram rode out and met Jehu at the plot of ground that had belonged to Naboth. Jehu drew his bow and shot an arrow that pierced Joram's heart. Jehu ordered a chariot officer, "Throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth. Carry out the Lord's words spoken by the prophet Elijah" (2 Kin 9:14-29).

Then Jehu went to the city of Jezreel. Jezebel was posed at the window and Jehu ordered the eunuchs with her to throw Jezebel down. The men threw her down, and horses ran over her body.

Jehu went inside and ate his lunch. Then he ordered, "Bury that cursed woman." When they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. They reported back to Jehu. He said, "This is the Word of the Lord that he spoke through his servant Elijah: At Jezreel, dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. Jezebel's body will become dog manure on the ground in Jezreel, so no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel'" (2 Kin 9:30-37).

Ahab's family had 70 sons living in Samaria. The leaders of the city took the royal princes and slaughtered all 70 of them.

The next morning Jehu stood before all the people and said, "You should know that not a word the Lord has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail. The Lord has done what he promised through his servant Elijah."

Jehu proceeded to kill everyone in Jezreel who had any connection with Ahab's family. It happened just as the Lord had promised through Elijah (2 Kin 10:1-17).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of Ahab's sins against God?
2. What were some of the miracles that God performed through Elijah?
3. What was the relationship between King Ahab and Prophet Elijah?
4. How were the prophecies made by Elijah fulfilled?
5. Today, who are some of the people who consider God's servants to be troublemakers?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. God often uses nature to punish people who rebel against him. When the Israelites served and worshiped the false god Baal, God decreed a drought against Israel (1 Kin 17:1).
2. The person who rejects the Lord will consider the Lord's messenger a troublemaker and may even consider him an enemy. That was Ahab's reaction to Elijah (1 Kin 18:17-18; 21:17-29).

3. The sinner does not recognize that he is responsible for damaging himself, his health and society. He places the blame on others. Ahab accused Elijah of being a troublemaker and did not assume responsibility for the consequences of his own sins (1 Kin 18:17-18).
4. The Lord God is the only true God with power to act. The competition between Baal's prophets and Elijah on Mount Carmel wasn't to decide whether the Lord or Baal was more powerful. It was to determine which was the only true God. Elijah's word (1 Kin 18:22-25), his prayer (1 Kin 18:37), and the acclamation of the people (18:39) show that it was a battle to determine who was the only true God. Monotheist faith was determined.
5. Those who serve the Lord are imperfect. Elijah was a hero of the faith; however, he became afraid of Jezebel, he became discouraged, acted like a person without faith (1 Kin 19:3-4) and became full of self-pity (1 Kin 19:10). God's servants are still mud vessels (2 Co 4:7; Ja 5:17).
6. God is honest and fulfills his promises. He fulfilled his promises of punishing Ahab, Jezebel and their descendants (1 Kin 21:20-24). Ahab died and the dogs lapped his blood (1 Kin 22:38). Dogs devoured the body of Jezebel (2 Kin 9:30-37) and the male descendants of Ahab were murdered by Jehu (2 Kin 10:1-17).