

Study Aids
Discussion Questions and Suggested Reading
For “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson 59

The history of the divided kingdom is a sordid story. Several different timelines exist for this history, and hard dates for individual kings are also hard to come by. But the northern kingdom, known as Israel, lasted approximately a little over 200 years. Depending upon the source you choose, this can be divided into 3 or 4 periods. This first was the period of civil strife between the north and south, lasting up until the reigns of Ahab in the north and Jehoshaphat in the south. Then, there was a time of peace that led to intermarriage between the two houses. After that there was a period of the renewal of hostilities accompanied by a time of growing wealth and prosperity in both kingdoms. The final decline of Israel was rapid, with a quick parade of new kings, some only lasting for weeks before being overthrown.

Elijah and Elisha are the two prominent prophets of the first period. We had time to mention Elijah briefly in the lesson, (reference was made to the chapters covering the account of his life) but he was such a powerful influence in the country that when he was taken up into heaven by the whirlwind, Elisha called out: “the chariots of Israel and its horsemen.” That is how Elisha evaluated the worth of Elijah. He was worth divisions of an army. The same was said of Elisha at his death. We did not have time to include the many stories of Elisha in our summary, but they can be found starting in 2nd Kings chapter 2 and continuing to chapter 13. You would do well to read about both of these men.

Questions:

Why was Jeroboam regarded by the Jews as being the one who caused Israel to sin? Jeroboam saw it as an act of necessity, an act to counter the law saying people must go to Jerusalem to worship and offer sacrifices. Why was it considered a bad thing to do?

What was the role of the shrines at Bethel and Dan?

What was the ultimate danger that Jezebel brought into Israel? Why was this so serious? Do we regard it as serious in our day? Was the First Commandment relevant to their time? To Ours?

Suggested Reading for further study:

We have selected the book from Reader’s Digest, Great People of the Bible and How They Lived for previous lessons because of its easy-reading style and the helpful use of photos and illustrations. Once again we recommend it for further study on the prophets Elijah and Elisha, pages 204 – 221.