



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

1 KINGS 12-22 &
2 CHRONICLES

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

If you ask people to pick a “Bible time” during which they would most like to live, many people will automatically pick the time of King Solomon of Israel. After all, it was an era of unprecedented prosperity and happiness. Wisdom and justice abounded. And the land was filled with the knowledge of the true God.

If such idyllic conditions actually prevailed, they did so only for a short time at the beginning of Solomon’s reign. As we have seen, Solomon’s extravagance and idolatry weakened his kingdom. By the end of his reign, political tensions were smoldering.

In this volume, we see these tensions finally ignite into flame. The northern tribes of Israel, chafing from years of oppressive rule under Solomon, now rebel against the despotism of his inexperienced son, Rehoboam. This is a development that God himself predicted.

With this development comes an opportunity for a bright new beginning. God has already chosen Jeroboam as the man of the hour to lead the new kingdom of Israel. The time is right for him to enact much-needed political and social reforms, and to renew and revitalize the worship of the one God. Incredibly, Jeroboam wastes no time in instituting his own idolatrous religion. Judah’s King Rehoboam proves to be no better.

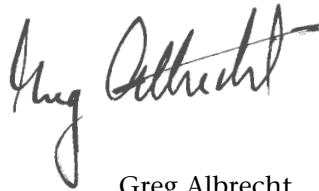
As so we begin the roller coaster ride of Israel’s divided kingdom. The northern kingdom of Israel drops to ever-increasing lows in depravity, while the southern kingdom of Judah experiences peaks and valleys of righteous and evil rulers—some of whom represent both extremes. All the while, there are wars, conflicts, political intrigue, assassinations, coups, countercoups and threats of

annihilation from Israel's powerful neighbors of Egypt, Assyria and Syria.

Against this chaotic backdrop, God's prophets emerge as clear voices of reason, reproof and reassurance of better things to come for Israel. Unlike Samuel, this new type of prophet holds no political or priestly power, and is often at odds with the kings he is called to correct. Elijah is the most memorable of these—set against the corruption of Ahab and Jezebel.

Perhaps more than any other part of the Bible, the books of Kings and Chronicles show us case history after case history of human beings as they struggle with their own fallen nature, the evil that is in the world and the grace that God offers. We are reminded that no one, no matter how powerful or righteous, is immune from sin and evil.

But we are also reminded that no one in this life is so far gone that God is incapable of redeeming him or her.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don't be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each "daily" lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

•**Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

•**Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

1 KINGS 12-22

2 CHRONICLES 1-9

A Kingdom
Divided

Introduction to 1 Kings 12-22

Authorship: Jewish scribes regarded Jeremiah as the author of the two books of Kings, originally one book. The endings of Jeremiah and Kings are virtually identical (2Ki 24:18–25:29; Jer 52:1-34). However, many scholars today propose that a number of inspired authors and editors had a hand in 1 Kings. The prophet Isaiah—or someone in his circle—is a good candidate because Isaiah 36-39 closely follows the actions of 2 Kings 18-20. The inspired editors and compilers drew on earlier sources and had first-hand information (1Ki 11:41; 14:29).

Date: The material covered in 1 Kings 12-22 reaches from the reigns of Jeroboam (c. 931-910 B.C.) and Rehoboam (c. 931-913 B.C.) to the time of Elisha (around 800 B.C.). The internal evidence indicates that the narrative was completed in the 500s B.C., because the fall of Jerusalem of 587-6 B.C. is the concluding event for 1 and 2 Kings (2Ki 25:1-21).

Setting and purpose: If 1 Kings 1-11 can be described as “Israel’s Golden Age,” then “A House Divided” is a good overall theme for this section of Scripture. The cracks and stresses among the Israelite tribes papered over under David and Solomon erupt in full fury. 1 Kings 12 shows northern Israel in open revolt against the house of David. Israel becomes two nations: the House of Judah in the south with Jerusalem as its capital and the House of Israel in the north, with its capital finally located in Samaria, under Omri and subsequent kings. As the two nations fight among themselves, the prophets emerge as spokesmen for God, especially in the northern Kingdom which is cut off from the Temple in Jerusalem.

The main themes can be summarized as follows:

1. *God rules in the kingdoms of men.* He is the Sovereign Lord, Yahweh, the ever-living, all-powerful God of Israel (1Ki 18:36-37). The people, especially in the northern kingdom, were in danger of forgetting that, and the prophets were sent to remind them. For example, Elijah’s name means, “Yahweh is El” or “The Lord is God.” 1 Kings 12-22 is a case study of God’s sovereignty.

No one can escape his just decrees. Furthermore, both the good and bad actions of people fit into his purposes (12:12-15).

2. *God keeps his promises.* God's promises and covenant relationships are the key to Israel's continued existence. For example, Rehoboam, Solomon's impetuous son, is allowed to keep part of the kingdom for David's sake. This promise applies to David's successors (15:1-5), though it is conditional upon obedience (2:2-4).

3. *Attitude is primary.* Service and faithfulness to God determines the fate of Israel and its neighboring nations. David becomes the standard by which kings' reigns are measured (15:11).

Distinctive features: 1 Kings 12-22 could also be called "the Book of the Prophets." In these chapters the inspired messengers of God become more important than kings or priests. It is fatal to interfere with a prophet on his mission (13:11-32). The words of the inspired prophets issue from God himself, and his words come to pass in spite of the personal failings of each prophet (13:31-32).

In this dramatic and colorful section of Scripture we see powerful confrontations between kings and prophets. We meet ruthless Jeroboam, weak but brave Ahab, and the scheming Jezebel. But we also see examples of God's mercy and grace. We encounter dynamic Elijah and faithful Elisha and marvel at the faith of the humble widow of Zarephath. The prophets are constant reminders that Israel is God's chosen people and that it is only by his grace that the nation is preserved.

Reading outline:

Day	Text	Theme
1-2	1 Kings 12:1–13:10	A House Divided
3-4	1 Kings 13:11–15:24	Troubled Kingdoms
5-6	1 Kings 15:25–18:4	Coup and Counter-Coup
7-8	1 Kings 18:5–19:8	The "Troubler" of Israel
9-10	1 Kings 19:9–19:21	Elijah's Ups and Downs
11-12	1 Kings 20:1–20:43	Prophets and Politics
13-14	1 Kings 21:1–22:28	A Dastardly Deed
15	1 Kings 22:29–53	True Prophets Don't Lie

The Divided Kingdom

King Jeroboam ruled Israel in the north and Rehoboam ruled Judah in the south.



The Great Turning Point

DAY 1

1 Kings 12:1-24

Have you ever experienced circumstances where the outcome depended on one person's decision? How were you affected?

1. Why did Rehoboam lose the support of the northern tribes (vs. 6-15)?
2. What was the result of Rehoboam's headstrong decision (vs. 16-19)? How many tribes stayed loyal to him (v. 20)?
3. How was Rehoboam prevented from marching against the rebellious tribes (vs. 21-24)?

1. Do you recall the last time you made a decision you later regretted? Do you believe God helped you in spite of your mistake?
2. "Youth is wasted on the young." Is this a fitting lesson from this chapter? Does Proverbs 15:1 apply here?
3. What life lesson have you learned from this chapter?

*This chapter narrates a fateful and decisive moment in the history of Israel. Though the Israelites were always capable of revolts, the nation had essentially thought of itself as one. Now there would be **two rival kingdoms** in the land. The larger one was the **House of Israel** to the north with its eventual capital at Samaria and the **House of Judah** headquartered at Jerusalem. This political separation affected the next 300 years or so of Israelite history. It also sheds light on colorful expressions and prophetic references such as "Samaria" and "Ephraim" as in Hosea 7:1. Both words refer to the entire northern kingdom.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

God Keeps Watch

1 Kings 12:25–13:10

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you know people who think that God is (a) unconcerned about the details of our lives, (b) allowing us free choice, (c) controlling everything that happens?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Jeroboam contrive to keep the people on his side? What was his primary fear (12:25-33)? Do you think his fear reflected a lack of faith in God's promise to him of an enduring dynasty (11:38)?
2. Did the blatant establishment of idolatry (12:28-30) go unopposed? What signs and wonders did the unnamed prophet give to Jeroboam (13:1-6)?
3. Why do you think Jeroboam responded as he did (v. 7)?
4. Why did the prophet refuse Jeroboam's offer (vs. 8-10)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Note Ecclesiastes 8:11. What are some examples of this principle about which you are aware—perhaps ones you heard on the news or read in the newspaper?
2. Jeroboam had been given kingship over Israel by a prophecy from God (1Ki 12:15). Yet he turned the nation to the worship of idols. Even when shown two irrefutable signs, he did not repent. Would you?

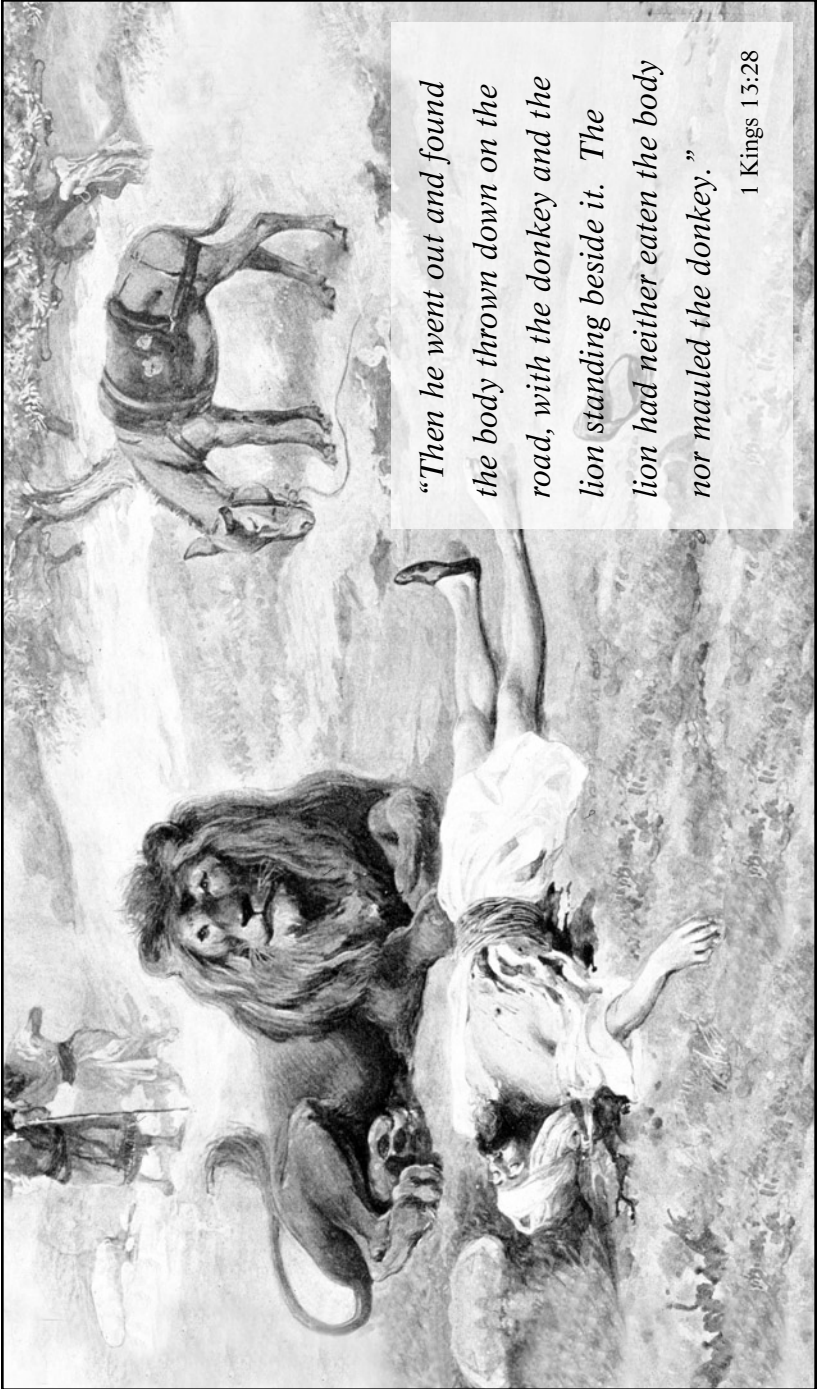
WINDOW
on the Word

*"The sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat," becomes a familiar phrase after this time, repeated some twenty times. Yet, Jeroboam was a shrewd politician. **Shechem and Bethel** were associated with the patriarch Jacob (Ge 28:10-22; 34). Jeroboam hoped that this connection with the patriarch Jacob would compete with the prestige of David's name. The calf worship at Bethel and Dan became a major stumblingblock for the new nation. In 1968 archaeologists at **Tell Dan** uncovered a bamah, or high place, measuring 20 by 61 feet made of limestone. Standing stones or maseboth, used in Israelite cultic practices, were also found. The earliest structures on the site may come from Jeroboam's time (1Ki 14:23).*

Shechem (located on the floor of the valley below), as mentioned in 1 Kings 12:25, was initially the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. From there, Jeroboam reigned Israel for a period of time, then moved his capital to Tirzah. While in Shechem, Jeroboam ordered two golden calves to be built, placing one in Bethel and the other in Dan.



Photo by P. Termes



“Then he went out and found the body thrown down on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey.”

1 Kings 13:28

There Once Was a Prophet From Bethel...

DAY 3

1 Kings 13:11–14:20

Were there any famous or colorful characters where you grew up? What did people say about them?

1. Describe the activity of the old prophet from Bethel (13:11-15).

2. Why did the prophet from Judah hesitate? What arguments finally convinced him to change his mind (vs. 16-19)? What happened next (vs. 20-30)?

3. How did the prophet from Bethel react (vs. 31-32)?

4. What action of Jeroboam showed his low opinion of priests and prophets (vs. 33-34)?

1. The prophet from Judah was diverted from his mission by another prophet claiming to have a message from an angel. Have you ever met such people? How did you react? Does Jeremiah 23:28-32 help here?

2. What precautions should we take when we meet someone who tells us to disregard God's instructions?

3. What can we learn from the prophet's decision not to follow the instruction he had received from God?

1 Kings 13:11-34 is a troubling passage because it appears to pit one prophet against another. Some scholars believe the statement in verse 18, "But he was lying to him" was added by later editors. When the prophet from Judah took lightly God's command to him by accepting the invitation to eat and drink, he was punished. The fact that the Bethel prophet's judgment against him came to pass demonstrates that the prophet from Judah was indeed speaking God's word, because he was punished for disobeying God's explicit instructions.

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

From Bad to Worse

1 Kings 14:1–15:24

OPENING
up to the Word

We all occasionally come across hard-headed, obstinate people (sometimes “they” are us). How do you handle them?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the result of the encounter between Jeroboam’s wife and the prophet Abijah (14:1-20)? By what standard was Jeroboam’s reign measured (vs. 8-9)?
2. What were the sins of Judah under Rehoboam (vs. 21-24)? How did God punish Judah (vs. 25-31)?
3. Why did God still show mercy to Judah (15:1-8)?
4. King Asa’s career is a refreshing contrast amid these distressing events. What did he accomplish (vs. 9-15)? What fateful new dimension did he inject into the Israel-Judah conflict (vs. 16-24)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. David is used as a spiritual model throughout these chapters. Do you have a spiritual model or mentor you admire?
2. Some scholars have observed that the discrepancy between potential and performance is a recurring theme in the books of Kings. How does Jeroboam’s career fit this concept?
3. Have you ever gone to a pastor or other Christian mentor, friend or leader for advice? Do you find yourself sympathizing with Jeroboam’s wife? Why or why not?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The “repulsive Asherah pole” mentioned in 1 Kings 15:13 possibly refers to the worship of a Canaanite mother goddess named Asherah (1Ki 18:19). A carved wooden image seems to have been associated with her cultic practices. Lewd rituals may have also occurred in her name. **Shishak of Egypt**, the plunderer of the Temple in the time of Rehoboam, is identified in history as Pharaoh Sheshonq I, the Libyan prince who founded Egypt’s 22nd Dynasty. He not only invaded Jerusalem in 925 B.C. but cut through Israel to Megiddo, according to an inscription found there. At the temple of Amun in Thebes, Shishak carved a relief scene mentioning the name of many conquered Palestinian towns including Gibeon, Beth-Horon, Aijalon and the “Field of Abram.”*



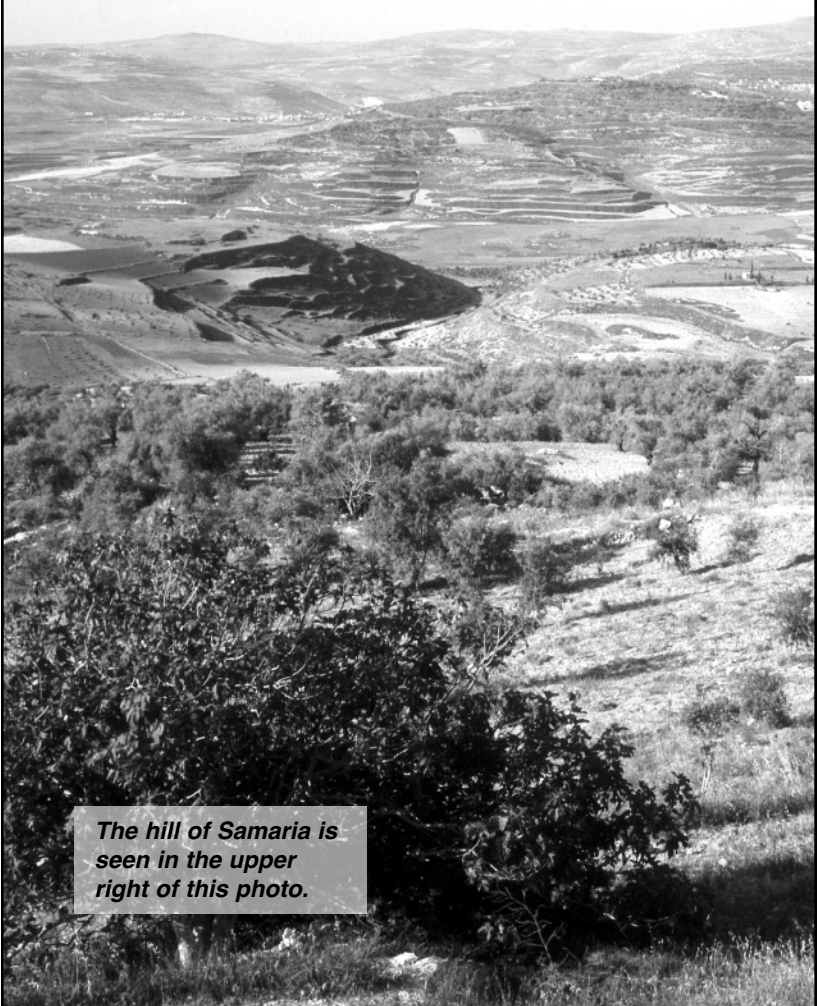
“In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made.”

1 Kings 14:25-26

Bas-relief of Pharaoh Sheshonq I, at Temple of Amun at Karnak, with list of captured Palestinian and Syrian towns.

“In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill.”

I Kings 16:23-24



The hill of Samaria is seen in the upper right of this photo.

Coup and Countercoup

DAY 5

1 Kings 15:25–16:28

Did you enjoy history as a subject in school? What did you *not* like about it?

1. Who succeeded Jeroboam (15:25-26)? What happened to him (vs. 27-28)?
2. What did Baasha do to ensure that he remained in power (vs. 29-33)?
3. Why did God send a warning to Baasha (16:1-7)? How did the punishment come to pass (vs. 8-14)?
4. How long was King Zimri's reign (vs. 15)? How did Omri rise to power (vs. 16-23)? Did he deviate from the practices of Jeroboam (vs. 23-28)?

1. How would you describe the government in your country, state or city? (a) competent, (b) confused, (c) unstable, (d) in transition.
2. Today, many Christians live in lands where political instability is a life and death matter. Does Romans 13:1-7 apply in such cases? What about 1 Peter 2:13-17?
3. On the other hand, Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Passages such as Exodus 1:15-21 are often used to support the idea that there may be times to resist tyranny and unjust laws. Do you agree?

*The reign of **Omri** brought stability to a rapidly declining Israel. Though Omri is recognized by modern historians as an important king (the Assyrians called Israel Bit-Humri or "House of Omri") he is given only a short account in Scripture. He built Samaria as the new capital and showed political astuteness. **Samaria** was protected in the mountainous interior of Israel. It was easy to defend, set on a hill three to four hundred feet high. It had good access to the coastal plain to the west, and to strategic spots such as Megiddo and to the line of communications along the Jordan Valley to the east.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 6

Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah

1 Kings 16:29–18:4

OPENING
up to the Word

How much do you think a husband and wife affect each other's attitudes?

DIGGING
into the Word

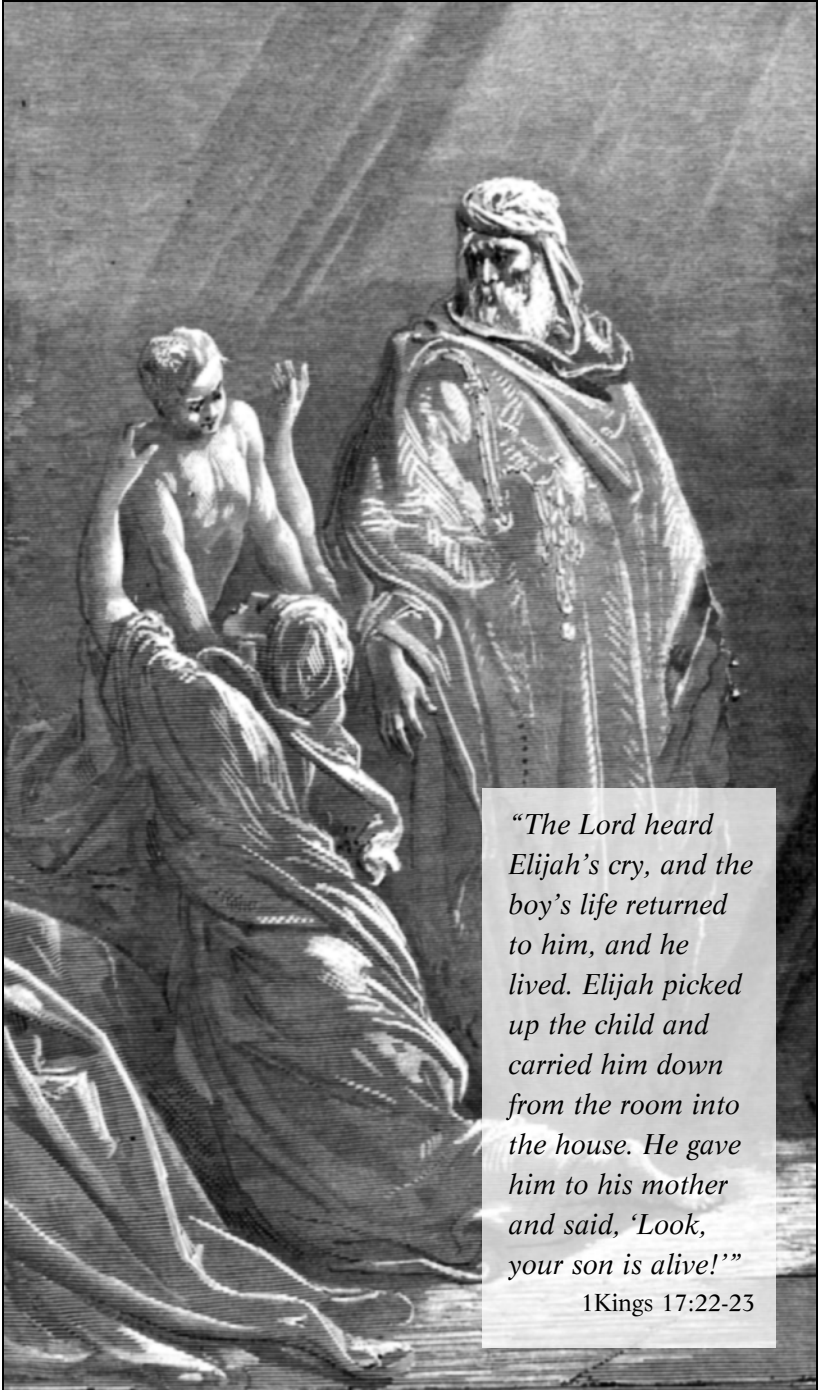
1. What actions by Ahab earned him the condemnation of the biblical writer (16:29-33)? How did he rate compared to Jeroboam (v. 31)?
2. Who was Jezebel and what religion did she bring with her from her homeland (vs. 31-32)?
3. There is spiritual significance in the rebuilding of Jericho. The city had been placed under a curse by Joshua (vs. 34). What was the nature of the curse (Jos 6:26)? Did it come to pass (1Ki 16:34)?
4. Does the Jericho incident show how little the word of the Lord was regarded in the northern kingdom? How did the prophet Hosea describe this situation (Hos 4:1-2, 6)?
5. What was Elijah's first public action (1Ki 17:1-6)? How did God test the widow of Zarephath (vs. 7-24)?
6. What incident revealed Jezebel's bloodthirsty nature (18:1-4)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. One of the themes of the Bible is that people often follow their leaders. While Jeroboam was evil, Ahab took an even greater step downward by promoting Baal worship in Israel.
2. Ahab and Jezebel corrupted and perverted Israel. Is it possible for individual Christians, congregations and even denominations to become corrupt by following human leadership rather than Jesus Christ (1Co 3:1-4)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Jezebel, wife of Ahab, incorporated the name **Baal** in her very name. Eth-Baal, King of Sidon, was her father. The Hebrew word Baal means "master," "possessor" or "husband." Baal was the storm god, a deity known throughout the eastern Mediterranean. One of his consorts was named Asherah, and Baal is known as the son of Dagon. The sea-going merchants of the Phoenician Empire spread Baal's name far and wide. Baal worship was seductive to the Israelites because he supposedly controlled the forces of nature and was worshiped as a god of fertility.*



*“The Lord heard
Elijah’s cry, and the
boy’s life returned
to him, and he
lived. Elijah picked
up the child and
carried him down
from the room into
the house. He gave
him to his mother
and said, ‘Look,
your son is alive!’”*

1Kings 17:22-23

DAY 7

Contest on Carmel

1 Kings 18:5-45

OPENING
up to the Word

What was the most dramatic contest, confrontation or event you have witnessed? What made it memorable?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who was Obadiah (vs. 5-15)? How did Ahab view Elijah (vs. 16-17)? How did Elijah respond (vs. 18-19)?

2. What were Elijah's rules for the contest with the prophets of Baal (vs. 20-26)? How did Elijah taunt his opponents (vs. 27-29)?

3. What was the significance of the 12 stones Elijah took for his hastily built altar (vs. 30-35)?

4. What happened next (vs. 36-39)? Water would have been a precious substance after three years of drought. What did Elijah then do to the prophets of Baal?

5. What other signs confirmed that Elijah was sent from God (vs. 40-46)? Did King Ahab seem to respect Elijah's actions?

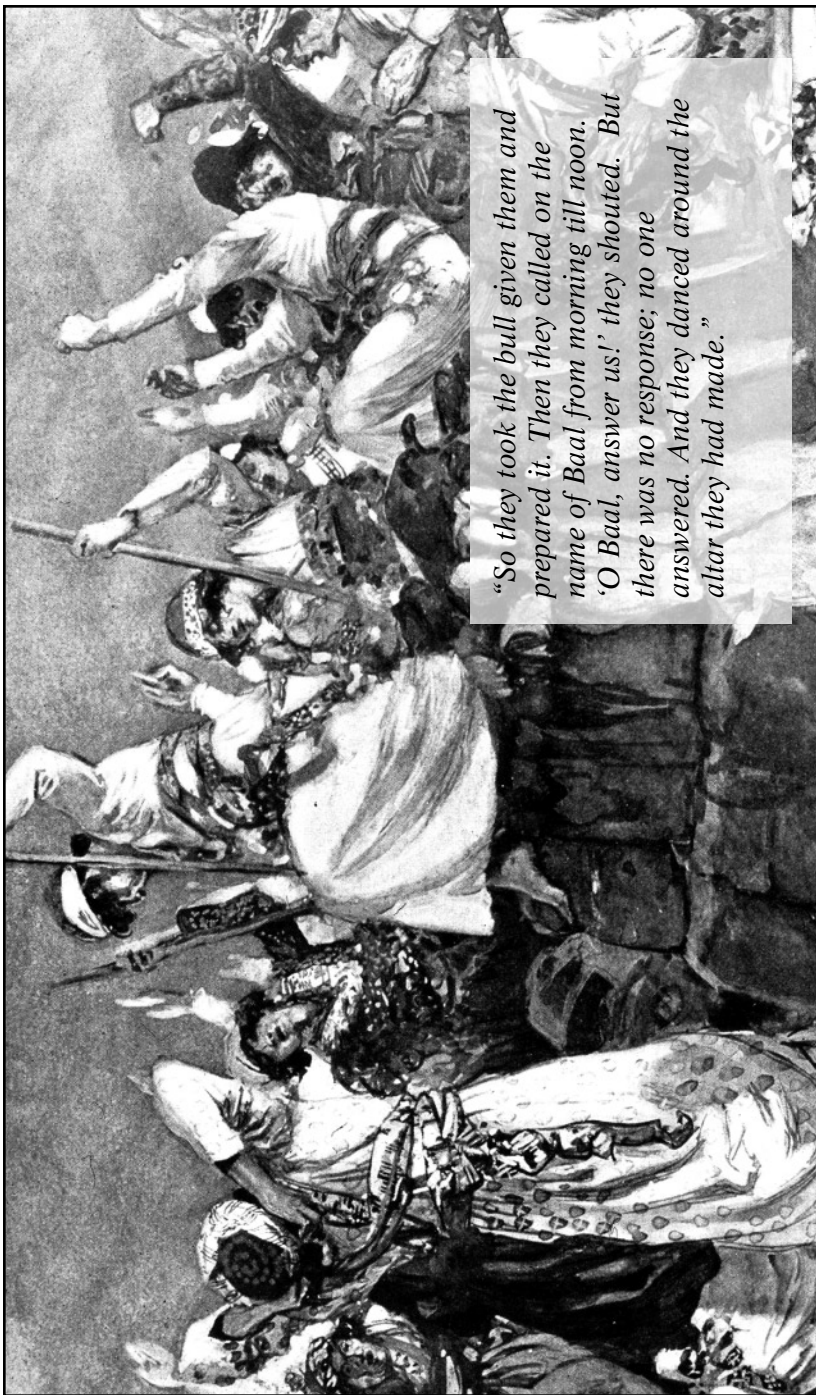
LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you know of a Christian leader who seems to fulfill a prophet-like function today?

2. The distance from Carmel to Jezreel was about 18 miles. Why do you think Elijah ran before Ahab?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Priests and Levites were given the role of God's intercessors for the people. The **prophets** were God's messengers. Accountable only to God, they were, in Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's phrase, "enforcers of the covenant" (How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, page 149). There was a dire need for them. Idolatry abounded. The **prophets of Baal** indulged in a custom common to many pagan priests. The practice of self-inflicted wounds to cajole or arouse a deity's pity or response is attested to in ancient tablets from Ugarit, north of Syria.*



“So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. ‘O Baal, answer us!’ they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.”

Artwork by James Tissot