

GOD'S COVENANT IN ISRAEL (Northern Kingdom)**1 Kings 16:29–19:18; 15:1-5; 2 Kings 13:1-5, 22-23**

Memory Verse: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* (Matt. 6:24 ESV).

Background Helps:

After the reign of King Solomon over a united Israel, the kingdom divided between Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Over the next several weeks, we will study God's covenant story in each half of the divided kingdom. We begin this week with “God's covenant in Israel (the northern kingdom).”

Unfortunately, the northern kingdom had an unbroken succession of evil kings who led the people astray from following the Mosaic covenant. This week, specifically, we will learn how the wicked king Ahab led the people to serve Baal, thus violating the first of the Ten Commandments. Ahab's reign is covered in 1 Kings 16:29–22:40.

During this period God called the prophet Elijah to restore the people to the covenant, to the worship of Yahweh (the LORD). Notice Elijah's reference to the covenant in 1 Kings 19:10, 14: “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away” (repeated verbatim twice!).

Saturday's reading (2 Kings 13:1-5, 22-23) skips ahead to the reign of wicked King Jehoahaz in Israel. Here we find that the LORD continued to be gracious and compassionate toward the northern kingdom, in spite of their sin, “because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now” (v. 23). God's covenant with Abraham caused him to remain faithful to Israel even though they violated the covenant God had made with them through Moses.

Lesson Helps:

Based on this week's readings, here is a possible lesson aim: My students will learn about Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal, so that they will choose to follow the LORD as their God.

Here are some elements you may want to include in your lesson:

- The first of the Ten Commandments (the Mosaic covenant): “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3).
- The introduction of Baal worship in Israel and the resulting drought (1 Kings 16:29-34; 17:1; 18:1-2)
- Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal and the end of the drought (18:17-46). Notice especially the choice that Elijah places before the people in 18:21 along with their ultimate response in 18:39. Use the storytelling method in reviewing this dramatic episode (see below).
- (Optional: See the aftermath of the contest in 19:1-18.)

- In our memory verse, Matthew 6:24, Jesus places the same kind of choice before us today, specifically, the choice between God and money. You could help your class to brainstorm other options: “You cannot serve God and _____.”
- Challenge your students to choose to be faithful to the Lord under the terms of the new covenant, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Home Assignment:

📖 Read 2 Chronicles 22–24.

📖 Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV.

Storytelling¹

Storytelling is one of the most effective teaching methods, for children and adults alike. It is true: Everybody loves a story. But good storytelling is an art that follows some time-tested principles. How can you tell a good story? Here are some suggestions:

- Use picturesque, vivid, descriptive, dramatic language.
- Use dialogue between the characters.
- Leave out extraneous details (but sometimes details that seem extraneous at the beginning of a story turn out to be important later on). Be as concise as possible.
- Make sure the story is clearly and logically presented in a manner appropriate to the age level of your audience.
- Arouse interest at the beginning of the story.
- Use questions from time to time to hold the attention of your audience.
- Use visual aids, if appropriate.
- Make sure your story has a point and conveys that point to the audience.
- *Above all, do not merely report the story, but relive the story by dramatic use of both voice and body.* (To achieve this effect, the teacher must know the story thoroughly and enter into the plot through the use of imagination.)
- Use the basic narrative plan as portrayed in the following diagram:

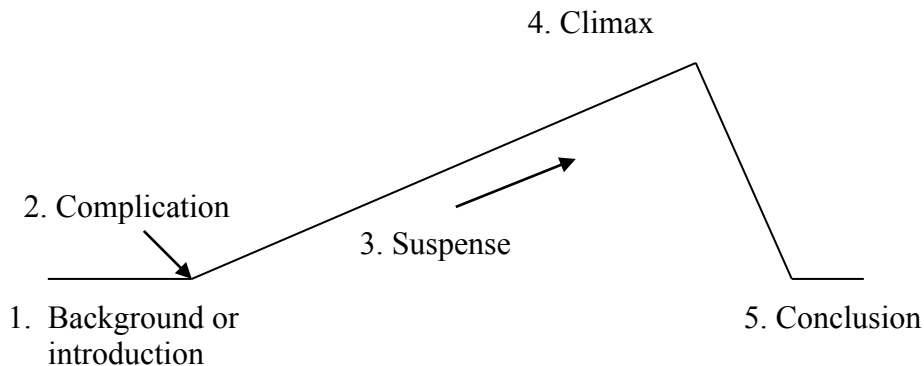


Fig. 1

There are five elements to the basic narrative plan: (1) the background or introductory material; (2) the introduction of some complication or problem; (3) suspense which builds through new

¹ Jay Adams, *Pulpit Speech* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 21-40.

complications, failures to solve the original problem, or new insights into the problem; (4) a climax or solution to the problem or problems; and (5) if necessary, a brief conclusion. The teacher is advised to read through the story of Esther in the Bible to see an example of masterful use of this narrative plan and a truly great story.