

The Story – Chapters 15: *God’s Messengers*

Introduction

Although Israel experienced unprecedented achievement and prosperity during most of Solomon’s reign, at the end, his oppression of his people through taxes and conscripted work, and his worship of foreign gods, led to a divided kingdom after his death.

If you don’t have *The Story* book, you can read 1 Kings 12-19, 2 Kings 2, 4, and 6; Hosea 4-5, 8-9 and 14; and Amos 1, 3-5 and 9.

Summary of Chapter 15 – God’s Messengers

Israel sank deeper into idolatry under Ahab and Jezebel.

But God did not sit idly by. Instead, God called prophets to speak on His behalf and demonstrate that there is no God but YHWH. The prophet Elijah warned King Ahab that Israel would experience a 3-year drought because of their worship of the pagan god, Baal. Then, atop Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged the idolaters to the ultimate faceoff—YHWH vs. Baal. Baal failed to show up but the LORD made a dramatic statement when He consumed the water-logged sacrifice with fire. However, Ahab’s wife Jezebel, responded with threats to kill Elijah, so he fled into the desert. God revealed Himself to Elijah at Mount Horeb, much like He had done nearly 600 years earlier to Moses at Sinai. He told Elijah that he had kings and prophets to anoint – one of whom was his successor, Elisha.

While the two prophets were traveling together, a whirlwind took Elijah up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Elisha, who succeeded Elijah, performed many miraculous feats for the benefit of the faithful remnant in Israel. However, even with the powerful ministries of Elijah and Elisha, the deeply embedded idolaters remained powerful, numerous, and unrepentant in Israel.

God sent Amos to warn Israel that her prosperity, injustice, and sinful ways would soon be judged. He promised them that if Israel did not repent, they would be taken captive. God also sent Hosea to Israel as a living object lesson of God’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness. However, Israel continued to ignore God’s pleas to return to Him.

Discussion Questions

1. The kings in Israel and Judah were supposed to be servants of God who implemented justice and led people to follow God so all nations would know God. But most didn't embrace that role. Do you think servant leadership is important? As a leader, how do you embody servant leadership?
2. The split of Israel and Judah led to continual warfare for hundreds of years. What issues divide God's people today? What practical ways can you think of to promote unity within your church? What about unity with other Christians?
3. Amos and Hosea had some pretty tough words for the people of God in their day. What do you think they would say to Christians in this country today? What would they say to the people in your congregation? If you think that Amos' and Hosea's messages are still meaningful today, what can you do to be that prophetic voice?
4. What questions came up for you while you were reading these chapters?