

# (1 Kings) Why Dynasties Come and Go

by David Guzik

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*David Guzik's sermon explores the rise and fall of dynasties in 1 Kings, emphasizing the importance of loyalty to God and the consequences of leadership failures.*

**Duration:** 56:45

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 15:1, 1 Kings 16:1-5

**Topics:** "Kingdom Dynamics", "Godly Leadership"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by reminding the audience of the previous events in the book of First Kings, specifically the transition of power from David to Solomon. They highlight that Solomon's reign was a mixture of both good and bad. The speaker emphasizes the importance of heeding God's warnings and not disregarding them, using the example of Ahab's failure to listen to God's warnings. They also mention the significance of God blessing the descendants of David for David's sake, not based on their own character or qualities. The sermon concludes by introducing the next king of Judah, Asa, who reigned for 41 years in Jerusalem.

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## Transcript

Well, tonight we intend to get through chapters 15 and 16. Hopefully, we'll be able to get through both of them. The best way to do it is just to start right into it here.

Chapter 15, verse one. But we should remind ourselves of what we've seen already in the book of First Kings. We remember that in the very opening chapters, David was still alive and he was passing the kingdom on to his son Solomon.

Well, after the death of David, Solomon took the throne, and his throne was a mixture of both glorious good and tragic bad. He ended very badly. And while we hope for a good result in the end for Solomon, how we wish we see him in heaven, we hope that maybe Ecclesiastes was written at the very end of his life and it's his statement of repentance.

We have to admit that biblically speaking, we have no proof for it. In any regard, after Solomon, his son Rehoboam was a foolish ruler. And because of his foolishness, the kingdom was split into two.

The ten northern tribes known as Israel, the two southern tribes known as Judah. And last time we were together, we saw the end of both the reign of the northern king, whose name was Jeroboam, and the king

over the southern kingdom known as Judah. His name was Rehoboam.

And so now, beginning in chapter 15, we kind of come to one of those interesting phenomenon in the book of 1st and 2nd Kings, where you'll have a couple of kings of Judah, and then a couple of kings of Israel, and then they kind of go back and forth. So first off, in this first part of the chapter, we have two kings from Judah, the first one being King Abiyam, verses 1 through 8. In the 18th year of King Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Abiyam became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Machah, the granddaughter of Abishalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him. His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.

Nevertheless, for David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem. Because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.

Now the rest of the acts of Abiyam and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the king of Judah? And there was war between Abiyam and Jeroboam. So Abiyam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. Then Asa, his son, reigned in his place.

This son of Rehoboam, known as Abiyam, he only reigned three years obviously showing that there was not much of a blessing of God upon his reign. It's very interesting as we come into this point of the book of 1st Kings, because if you compare a lot with the book of 2nd Chronicles, which is a parallel history of these periods, Chronicles fills in details that we didn't know. For example, if you take a look at the life of Abiyam from 2nd Chronicles chapter 13, you'll learn that Abiyam knew something of the Lord, and you would even say that he was a preacher, because there's sort of a message that he preached to the people and to the armies of Israel there in 2nd Chronicles.

But he did not uproot the idolatry and the sexual immorality that was introduced by Rehoboam. He didn't set things right. Isn't that important? If there's something wrong, you need to have a passion for setting it right.

Now, the successor of Abiyam, Asa, who's mentioned here in verse 8, he removed these centers of sexually charged idolatry that were so common in the land of Judah. But Abiyam did not do it, and obviously, the hand of the Lord's blessing was not strong upon his reign. It tells us why right here.

It says, His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. As it says there in verse 3. That was the real problem with Abiyam's reign. His lack of a real personal relationship with God.

You know, David obviously sinned during his reign, yet his heart stayed loyal to the Lord his God. And again, if you were to go over to 2nd Chronicles 13, it fills in more interesting details about the reign of Abiyam. By the way, in 2nd Chronicles, don't get confused.

He's called Abiyah in 2nd Chronicles. You have sometimes these slight variations of names differing between 2nd Chronicles and 1st Kings. Anyway, it tells us how there was war between Jeroboam of Israel and Abiyam of Judah, and how Abiyam challenged Jeroboam on the basis of righteousness and faithfulness to God.

Jeroboam responded with a surprise attack and victory seemed certain for Israel over Judah. But this is when Abiyam cried out to the Lord and God sent a victory for Judah that day. And this is what it says in 2nd Chronicles 13.

Verse 18. Thus the children of Israel were subdued at that time and the children of Judah prevailed because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers. And so God sent some blessing during this reign.

But yet Chronicles also tells us of the standing of Abiyam at the end of his brief reign. It says this. But Abiyah grew mightily, married 14 wives, and begot 22 sons and 16 daughters.

You see, in the midst of his victory, in the midst of the good leadership for Judah, he never had the relationship with the Lord nor the obedience to the Lord that he should have had. Yet I have to say that one of the most remarkable things in the 8 verses that we just read, what's in verses 4 and 5, where it says, Nevertheless, for David's sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem. You know, God blessed the descendants of David not for their own sake, but for David's sake.

God preserved the dynasty of David in Jerusalem for the sake of David, not for the sake of the character or the quality of his descendants. I think it's very interesting at this point. You know, you might read that and think, and I wouldn't blame you for thinking this.

It's entirely permissible for you to think that that's a little unfair. These are ungodly men. They should be judged for their own sin.

Why wouldn't God give these men the judgment that they deserve? And why would he hold back the hand of judgment just for the sake of David? I mean, they weren't David. They were just his descendants. Well, if you think that way, let me ask you a question.

Do you realize the basis on which God withholds judgment against you? Is it for your own sake? Or is it for the sake of the son of David? Here we have a little illustration of the righteousness and of the justification that we have in Jesus Christ, not for our own sake, but for the sake of the one to whom we are related. That is Jesus. In the same way, these men found that God kept his hand of judgment a bit off of them and did not end their dynasty, even though you might argue that they deserved it.

But he did it for the sake of David. Now, in verse nine, we have this next king of Judah who succeeded Abiyam. His name is King Asa.

Verse nine. In the 20th year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah and he reigned 41 years in Jerusalem. His grandmother's name was Mahah, the granddaughter of Abishalom.

Asa did what was right in the sight of the Lord, as did his father David. So this was the great grandson of Solomon. And he took the throne of Judah at the end of Jeroboam's reign in Israel.

And of course, after the end of his father Abiyam's reign in Judah. And it says there plainly for us that Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David. You know, the kings of Judah were typically measured against David.

How well did they measure up against him and his walk and his heart after God? I do want you to notice something there in verse 11, where it talks about his father David. Now, was David literally the father of king Asa? No, he was his great, great grandfather. But this shows you how in the Hebrew language, this

term father can be used just for any ancestor, any person in the ancestral line.

And so no, David was not the father of Asa. Abiyam was his father, but yet because he was a definite ancestor of Asa, it is legitimate in the Hebrew way of thinking to call him his father. Well, let's get on to some of his reforms here in verse 12.

And he banished the perverted persons from the land and removed all the idols that his father had made. Also, he removed Macha, his grandmother, from being queen mother because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the brook Kidron.

The high places were not removed. Nevertheless, Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days. He also brought into the house of the Lord the things which his father had dedicated and the things which he himself had dedicated, silver and gold utensils.

Well, it's very interesting how it describes here the perverted persons of the land, which Asa had cast out of the land, that he banished them. This is actually a very diplomatic way of saying it in Hebrew. But what these actually were, were state-sanctioned homosexual idol temple prostitutes.

And again, either paid by the state or approved of by the state, Asa said, I will not approve of them in my reign. Perhaps my father approved of them. Perhaps his father before him did.

But I will not approve of them. And he removed these perversions and these idols, even when it touched his own family. It says also he removed Macha, his grandmother, from being queen mother because she had made an obscene image of Asherah.

That demonstrates the thoroughness of Asa's reforms. He was able to act righteously even when it was his own family that was in the wrong. In particular, his own grandmother.

I don't know about you, but it would be awfully hard for me to correct my own grandmother in such a way. But Asa knew that righteousness demanded it. And so he did it.

And so he did it. It says very interesting there by the Brook Kidron, the Kidron Valley through which the Brook Kidron runs. Actually, at that time in Israel, that was the garbage dump of ancient Jerusalem.

And so he threw this image into the garbage dump and burned it. And it's described as obscene in the English language there. But maybe a better translation for this from the original Hebrew is that it was something frightening or horrible or abominable.

They believed that it was some sort of fertility statue connected with the worship of Asherah. And so he did a great deal of reform. Yet at the same time, we have to say, as we look here in these verses, all the way down to verse 15, it says he also brought into the house of the Lord all the things which his father had dedicated and the things which he himself had dedicated, silver and gold utensils.

He gave wealth unto the house of the Lord. He did all these wonderful things. But it does tell us here that he did not cut down.

The high places were not removed. In other words, in 2 Chronicles 14, 3 says that Asa did remove high places, but high places connected with the worship of foreign gods. It seems that even so, even the good kings of Judah oftentimes allowed these improper places of worship to the true God to exist.

But nevertheless, it's wonderful to see that it says at the end of verse 14, Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days. His loyal heart was shown in his reforms against idolatry and the state-sanctioned perversion. And of course, in his restoration, certain gold and silver utensils to the temple.

Now, verse 16. Now, there was war between Asa and Basha, king of Israel, all their days. And Basha, king of Israel, came up against Judah and built Ramah that he might let none go out or come in to Asa, king of Judah.

Then Asa took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the treasuries of the king's house and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And king Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, the king of Syria who dwelt in Damascus, Let there be a treaty between you and me and as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a present of silver and gold.

Come and break your treaty with Basha, king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me. So you understand what's going on here. Asa, the king of Judah, is attacked by Basha, the king of Israel from the north.

Now, again, I have to say it gets a little bit confusing because we haven't even got to Basha yet. He comes next. But again, he's attacked from this northern king of Israel.

And so what he does is he makes an alliance with the king of Syria. He gives him gold and silver from the temple and he tries to win the favor, win the support of the king of Syria, says, hey, fight with me, defend me, help me against the king of Israel. So now we pick it up again in verse 20.

So Ben-Hadad heeded king Asa and sent the captains of his army against the cities of Israel. He attacked Eon, Dan, Abel, Beth, Mecha and all of Chinneroth with all the land of Naphtali. Now it happened when Basha heard it, he stopped building Ramah and remained in Tisra.

Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah. None was exempted and they took away the stones and timber of Ramah and Basha had used for building. And with them, king Asa built Geva of Benjamin and Mizpah.

But the rest of the acts of Asa, all his might and all that he did and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age, he was diseased in his feet. So Asa rested with his father and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, his father. Then Jehoshaphat, his son, reigned in his place.

So it's really remarkable how this godly king of Judah bought off the king of Syria to come over to his side and help him. And we have to say that in some way, this seemed to work. If all you had in front of you was the text here in second kings, excuse me, first kings, you might say, well, you know, I don't think he should have done it, but no real harm came of it.

It seemed to work out okay. But wouldn't that be a good time to check over in second chronicles and see if it says anything about it? Let me read you from second chronicles chapter 16, what God said to King Asa through a prophet named Hanani. It says, because you have relied on the king of Syria and have not relied on the Lord, your God.

Therefore, the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. Were the Ethiopians and the Lubam not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart he is loyal to him.

In this you have done foolishly. Now, from therefore, from now on, you shall have wars. Isn't that interesting? He should have trusted in the Lord.

You see, God was going to deliver Judah one way or another. And if Asa would have only trusted the Lord, the way that he should have, they would have seen a great miraculous deliverance. But instead, what did he do? He put his trust in the king of Syria.

And this, of course, was a great, great problem. I wish I could tell you that Asa heard this prophecy and, you know, repented and got his heart right with the Lord. He didn't.

Second Chronicles chapter 16 goes on to say, Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time. You know, Asa shows us the tragedy of a man who rules well, who seeks the Lord for many years, yet fails in a significant challenge of his faith and then refuses to hear God's correction.

You know, any one of us could fail in a challenge of faith that we have. I mean, none of us are perfect. But what was Asa's perhaps greater problem than his failure of faith? In that he refused to receive correction from the Lord.

You know, we have to say it's very interesting to learn from the bad kings that we're going to see here in first Kings. But you also learn a lot by looking at the good kings also, because most every one of the good kings of Judah has some flaw, some imperfection that really hinders them in their life. This was the problem with Asa.

Was that he trusted in the Syrian army. Now, before we leave Asa and go on to one of the kings of Israel there in verse 25, let me just tell you some of the other acts of Asa that are listed in the book of Second Chronicles. Chapters 14 through 16 describe these events.

First of all, he was a man who really encouraged national godliness. It says in Second Chronicles 14, 4, he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandments. It tells us also in chapter 14 that he built fortified cities and presided over a long period of peace.

It tells us that in response to Asa's prayer, that God defeated a huge Ethiopian army that came against Judah. We're also told that he had an encouraging word from the prophet Azariah that encouraged him to continue his reforms. And he also led a national recommitment to the covenant that Israel had made with God.

You read all this, you go, yes, what a great king. And you know, he was a great king, but he didn't finish very well. Did you notice that verse there in verse 23 at the very end? But in the time of his old age, he was diseased in his feet.

Second Chronicles gives us a fuller analysis. It says his malady was severe, yet in his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. This happened after he refused to hear God's word of correction through Hananiah the seer.

Some people think that Asa's foot ailment was gout. Some people think it was something else. But here you just know that this was a godly man who did not finish well.

The last years of his life were marked by unbelief and hardness against God and oppression against other people and disease. Look, something for me to think about as I have another birthday in just a few days. Age and time do not necessarily make us better.

We like to think that we do, that they do, don't we? You're getting older, you're getting wiser, you're getting more godly. And we hope that that is the case. But you know what? It isn't true for everyone.

Some people finish like Asa did. And we should have it determined in our heart that we will not be like that. All right, now starting at verse 25, let's take a look at a couple kings of Israel.

Now Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, became king over Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah. And he reigned over Israel two years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father.

In his sin, in which he made Israel sin. Then Basha, the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Basha killed him at Gibbathon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbathon.

And Basha killed him in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his place. And it was so when he became king that he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the Lord, which he had spoken by his servant Ahijah, the Shilonite.

Because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he had sinned, and by which he had made Israel sin, because of his provocation, which he had provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger. Now the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And there was war between Asa and Basha, the king of Israel, all their days. Now it's interesting.

When we have the comparisons among the kings of Judah, if they compare them to their father David, it's usually to say they weren't godly like their father David was. When they compare the kings of Israel, it's instead he was ungodly, just like his father Jeroboam was. And that's just the case here with this man, Nadab.

Nadab did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he walked in the ways of his father. This son of Jeroboam did just as his father did, continuing in his idolatry and in his hardness towards God. Again, 2nd Chronicles 11 tells us that both Jeroboam and his sons were responsible for driving the priests out of the land of Israel.

Nadab shared directly in the sins of his father Jeroboam. And at the end of it all, Basha, the king of Israel, murdered not only Nadab, but all of the house of Jeroboam. Now, do we remember the promise that God made to Jeroboam? He promised Jeroboam that if you would remain faithful to me and your sons would, then you would never have a threat of your dynasty perishing.

But here we have this dynasty perishing in a very short time after it was established. You have Jeroboam, and then you have Nadab, and then you have nothing. Nothing at all after that.

And it happened just according to the word of the Lord, which was spoken by his servant Ahiah. And so it's very sad. How many dynasties ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah? One.

One dynasty, the dynasty of David. How many dynasties ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel? Nine different dynasties. And this is the end of the first dynasty, the dynasty of Jeroboam.

For 250 years, nine different dynasties succeeded each other in their misrule over the kingdom of Israel. Well, now in verse 33, we have the reign of Basha, the king of Israel. In the third year of Asa, the king of Judah, Basha, the son of Ahiah, became king over all Israel in Tisra and reigned 24 years.

He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he made Israel sin. So this begins a new dynasty, the dynasty of Basha. This was a man who came to the throne wickedly through assassination.

How did he become the king? He killed the previous king and he wiped out all of the family of the previous king. Basha was a wicked man and he ushered in a dreadful period for Israel, both spiritually and politically. To put it plainly, as it says right there in verse 34, he did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam.

Though Basha was not a genetic descendant of Jeroboam, he was certainly a spiritual descendant of Jeroboam. Now we come now into chapter 16 and we have several successive kings of Israel. You know, have we been switching off between the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel? We'll put that on hold.

Now in chapter 16, you get not one king of Israel, not two, not even three. You get five different kings of Israel here in chapter 16. Verse one, more of the reign of Basha.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Basha saying, It is much as I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel's sin to provoke me to anger with their sins. Surely I will take away the posterity of Basha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Naboth. The dog shall eat whoever belongs to Basha and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields.

Now, again, we were told that Basha was the head of a conspiracy to kill Nadab, the son of Jeroboam. It tells us nothing of God's hand being with Basha, but yet we know that God fulfilled his purpose through the conspiracy of Basha against Nadab. He was a wicked man following the wicked pattern of Jeroboam.

Therefore, he would face the same judgment at Jeroboam and his house. I think this had special relevance to Basha because he believed that he was the instrument of judgment that God used to bring justice against the house of Jeroboam. Again, not a blood descendant, but a spiritual descendant of Jeroboam.

Now, I have to say that as you take a look at this and this promise to judge Basha, it raises a very interesting theological question. Did God ordain it that the house of Jeroboam be destroyed? Yes. It was prophesied.

It was ordained from heaven. So, was it the work of God to destroy the house of Jeroboam? Yes. Well, didn't Basha do the work of God then? Wasn't he just fulfilling the earlier prophecy of the Lord? How can God hold Basha responsible for this? I can just picture Basha standing before the Lord on the Day of

Judgment.

Hey, don't blame me for wiping out Nadab and all of Jeroboam's house. You prophesied it. I was just fulfilling your will.

What could I do, God? I was just your tool. I was an instrument in your hand and I just did what you wanted to do. Don't blame me.

Don't hold me responsible. Well, what would God say to a man like Basha in that situation? He would say, You wicked man. I used you to fulfill my purpose, but you did not do it because it was my purpose.

You didn't sit down and say, Oh, how can I please the Lord today? What does God want me to do? And God spoke to Basha and said, Kill Nadab and all the house of Jeroboam. And Basha said, No, Lord, I can never do that. I don't want to kill them.

But God made him do it. Does anybody think that for a moment? That God somehow forced a reluctant Basha to do what he never wanted to do? Never in a million years. No.

The wickedness of Basha was in his heart and he simply acted according to the wickedness that was already in his heart. And what did God do? God just used it. That's all you can say.

God used the wickedness that was already in his heart. You know, you could just make the same example if you want to with Judas who betrayed Jesus. Can you see Judas standing for the Lord on the Day of Judgment? Listen, why are you condemning me? I betrayed him, but I sent him to the cross.

I thought the cross was a good thing. I thought it was a thing from the fourth foundation of the world. And what would God say to Judas? He said, You wicked man, you betrayed him, but not out of the slightest desire to do good.

You betrayed him out of an evil heart and I simply used the evil in your heart. Well, verses 5 through 7, the death of Basha. Now the rest of the acts of Basha, what he did and his might, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? So Basha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tizra.

Then Elah, his son, reigned in his place. And also the word of the Lord came by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Basha in his house because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands and being like the house of Jeroboam and because he killed them. So again, this man Jehu apparently had a long career as a prophet, this son of Hanani.

Some 50 years after this word to Basha, this same Jehu seems to speak to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. And he rebukes him. He makes that this judgment that's going to come upon Basha in his house is certain.

But you have to say, wait a minute, it seems like Basha has escaped it. But we already have two kings now in the dynasty of Basha, right? Basha himself and now his son Elah. Well, what kind of reign will Elah have? Take a look here at verse 8. In the 26th year of Asa, king of Judah, Elah, the son of Basha, became king over Israel and reigned two years in Tizra.

Now his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tizra, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arzah, steward of his house in Tizra. And Zimri went in and struck him and killed him in the 27th year of king Asa of Judah and reigned in his place. Then it came to pass when he

began to reign, as soon as he was seated on his throne, that he killed all the household of Basha.

He did not leave him one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. Thus, Zimri destroyed all the household of Basha according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Basha by Jehu the prophet for all the sins of Basha and the sins of Elah, his son, by which they had sinned and by which they had made Israel sin in provoking the Lord God of Israel to angle with their idols. Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? Well, that's the second dynasty down.

First, the dynasty of Jeroboam. Now the dynasty of Basha is down. Dynasty of Basha only lasted for two rulers.

One, Basha himself. Secondly, Elah, who only reigned two years. You know, the hope of every king is to pass the throne onto his son and to further a lasting dynasty.

But because Basha was a wicked king, God did not bless his dynasty and his son only reigned for two years. And just as Basha had gained the throne through assassination, so the son of Basha was assassinated by Zimri, an officer in the army of Israel. And we look at it here, and just as much as the entire household of Jeroboam was destroyed, so was the entire household of Basha.

You know, this was common in the ancient world. This was standard practice. This is simply how you dealt with it when you assassinated the king and established a new dynasty.

You killed all the relatives of the former dynasty because you knew very well that some of them may want to come up and murder you and take the dynasty back. You know, this makes something even more remarkable in the pages of the Old Testament. How David treated Mephibosheth of the house of Saul and how David treated the house of Saul in the days of his reign.

How David shown kindness to the house of Saul and he did not have a heart to destroy the house of Saul as would be expected in those days. And so this massacre was an exact fulfillment of the word of the Lord that was brought to Basha earlier in this chapter. And so I want you to see this.

In less than 50 years, the first two dynasties of Israel's king had come to an end and every member of their families had been exterminated. That's radical, isn't it? Only 50 years. Two dynasties, not only out, but liquidated.

And you're thinking, well, could it get much worse than that? Listen, if you think a two year reign is short, how about a seven day reign? Look at it here, verse 15. In the 27th year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in Tisra seven days and the people were encamped against Gibethon, which belonged to the Philistines. Now, the people who were camped heard it said, Zimri has conspired and also has killed the king.

So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. Then Omri and Israel with him went up from Gibethon and they besieged Tisra. And it happened when Zimri saw that the city was taken.

Then he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house down upon himself with fire and died because of the sins which he had committed in doing evil in the sight of the Lord in walking in the way of Jeroboam and in the sin which he had committed to make Israel sin. Now, the rest of the acts of

Zimri and the treason which he committed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? The man who assassinated Elah and brought the dynasty of Basha to an end, his reign himself was not blessed. Now we have three dynasties dead and gone within the period of just 50 years.

I think it's interesting here that there was more of a democratic influence in ancient Israel than we might immediately think. The people heard that Zimri had assassinated the leader, had assassinated, what was his name? I'm forgetting it already. Elah, the son of Basha.

They heard that Zimri had assassinated him and how they wanted to, he wanted to set himself up as king. But the people said, no, we're not having him. We're not going to accept him.

Instead, they chose and put in a king of their own liking, Omri, who was the leader of the army. Might I say that this shows us something too, that Israel or the people of Israel, I should say, they were more responsible for their own leadership than we might immediately think. Don't we often think that, well, what can you do? The king's the king, the people are the people, they can't do anything.

I don't think so. They did something here, right? Many times ungodly leadership was accepted in Israel because actually, that's what the people wanted. So what do we have now? This is our fourth king in this chapter.

We started out with Basha, then we had Elah, then Zimri. Now Omri will reign in Israel beginning here at verse 21. Then the people of Israel, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

I got to talk about one thing before we talk about Omri. What's interesting about the death of Zimri? Suicide. Now, you know, the Bible doesn't have very many instances of suicide.

The ones that come immediately to my mind is you have Saul who killed himself, fell on his own sword. Although it seems that it's very possible that Saul tried to kill himself but did not succeed and he was actually finished off by an Amalekite who came and killed him. But he certainly tried to kill himself.

You have Ahithophel, one of the counselors of David who killed himself. And of course you have this man here, Zimri. And you have Judas in the New Testament who killed himself.

Oh, I'm forgetting one more. Samson killed himself, right? In the temple of the Philistines. Some people believe, because actually this is taught by the Roman Catholic Church, that suicide is an unforgivable sin.

The idea is, is if somebody commits suicide, they automatically go to hell and that's all there is to it. Now, I appreciate why somebody might teach that. It's a pretty good discouragement to committing suicide, isn't it? I mean, if it's guaranteed that you're going to go to hell if you commit suicide, that's a pretty good discouragement.

Of course, the Bible never approves of suicide. It is sin. You know what sin it is? It's murder.

It's self-murder, but it is murder. However, I think we're wrong if we regard it as the unforgivable sin. And I think we would say that any person who is a Christian who would commit suicide, they've obviously given in to the lies and the deceptions of Satan.

What does the Bible tell us the purpose of Satan is? It's his purpose to kill and to destroy. And so I believe that it is possible, tragic, that somebody may be a believer and may be so deceived, so plunged into darkness that they would commit suicide. But actually, it's natural, but it should never be considered heroic

and it should never be considered as an answer out.

If a person is ever contemplating suicide, there is no greater immediate reason than to know that this is a person being deceived by the devil. I can't believe that the Lord has ever spoken to anybody to commit suicide. Certainly not one of his children.

So it's just one of those interesting occasions. We don't have very many of them in the Scriptures, but this is certainly one of them. So Zimri only reigned for seven days, but he walked in the way of Jeroboam.

You know, God allowed many of the wicked kings of Israel to reign much longer than seven days, but he was under no obligation to do so. If God wants to say seven days and you're out, he had every right to do it. And so now we come to the next man, this man Omri, the king of Israel, this man who was the captain of the army of Israel and succeeded Zimri.

Here we come to verse 21. Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts. Half of the people followed Tibni, the son of Ginnah, to make him king, and half followed Omri.

But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni, the son of Ginnah. So Tibni died and Omri reigned in the 31st year of Asa, king of Judah. Omri became king over Israel and reigned 12 years.

Six years he reigned in Tisra and he brought the hill of Samaria, excuse me, and he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemar for two talents of silver and he built on the hill and called the name of the city which he built Samaria after the name of Shemar, the owner of the hill. Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did worse than all who were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and made his sin by and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols.

Now the rest of the acts of Omri, which he did and the might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab, his son, reigned in his place. Well, I sort of jumped to the exciting conclusion.

The last king that we're going to take a look at tonight, this famous King Ahab of Israel. But before we get to it, we should consider here the reign of Omri. Omri defeated the forces loyal to another man, to Bini.

So to Bini died, presumably killed after Omri after the defeat of his forces. After this brief civil war, Omri reigned and thus began the fourth dynasty of the kingdom of Israel. And he built the hill and on the name of the city, which he built Samaria.

This became the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. Omri built a capital that was politically neutral. It didn't have a previous political association with any tribe, but it was also a very strong defensive position.

This Samaria is going to be the center of life in the northern kingdom of Israel for the next couple hundred years. Nevertheless, despite his victories in battle, despite his ambitious building programs, what does it say about him? It says he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Isn't this interesting? Again, he's not a genetic descendant of Jeroboam, but he certainly is a spiritual one.

Jeroboam was the first king and each of the five kings after him followed in the evil ways of Jeroboam. Now, you should notice this. If you were to take the record of his rule right here, would you say Omri was a successful king or an unsuccessful king? You'd have to say he was unsuccessful.

Ungodly man, led the people into wickedness, so on and so forth. Did you know that in the records of secular history, Omri is one of the more successful and famous kings of ancient Israel. Omri's fame as a monarch, while it's downplayed by the author of Kings, was widely recognized in other places.

The Moabite stone that was discovered in the year 1868 refers to him as the conqueror of Moab. Assyrian ascriptions say that he was a great warrior. And for many years, the Assyrians referred to Israel as the house of Omri.

And so this man was a successful king from a human perspective, but not from a divine perspective. Now, of all the wicked things that Omri did, I can't think of any wickeder thing that he did than give birth to a son named Ahab. And we're going to spend a lot of time with Ahab.

We're just going to get to know him in the last few verses of this chapter. But let's spend a little bit of time getting to know Ahab starting at verse 29. In the 38th year of Asa, king of Judah, Ahab, the son of Omri, became king over Israel.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, reigned over Israel in Samaria 22 years. Now, Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. And it came to pass as though he had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took as his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Athbaal, king of the Sidonians.

And he went and served Baal and worshipped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, in which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image.

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days, Hillel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram, his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub, he set up his gates according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken through Joshua, the son of Nun.

Now we'll get to that last verse at the end of it. But let's just consider for a few minutes here this man Ahab. Again, Asa reigned for 41 years.

That's a long reign in Judah, right? So during his reign, he actually saw seven different kings of Israel during his 41 years from Judah. One of them that he saw was this man Ahab, the son of Omri. And I think it's very interesting.

All the kings of Israel are compared to Jeroboam, right? And for the most part we read, well, they did evil just like Jeroboam. They did evil just like Jeroboam. What does it say here of Ahab? It says the sins of Jeroboam were a little thing in his eyes.

And he did even more than the sins of Jeroboam. The father Omri had his reign and it was a political and economic success for Israel, but it was a spiritual failure. Ahab picked up where Omri left off.

The name Ahab may mean in Hebrew, resembling the father. And that's exactly what Ahab did. He resembled his father.

You know, sometimes they say of a child, well, he has his father's eyes. Well, I would say of Ahab that he had his father's lies. And he was a man who just led Israel into wickedness.

Now understand the difference between the sin of Jeroboam and the sin of Ahab. What was it that Ahab did that was so much worse? Okay, remember now. Jeroboam didn't want the people to go south to Jerusalem and worship in Judah, right? So what did he do? He set up two golden calves, one in Dan, one in Bethel.

And in those two golden calves, he said, this is the God that led you out of Egypt. So understand the sin of Jeroboam. It was the false worship of the true God.

That was the sin of Jeroboam. And the kings after him followed in the same way. What did Ahab do that was worse? Ahab promoted the false worship of a false God.

What he basically did was he brought in state-sponsored Baal worship, state-sponsored Ashtoreth worship, and the worship of many other pagan gods. Jeroboam had said, I will worship the Lord, but I'll do it my way. Now that's not a good thing to do, right? You should worship the Lord the way he wants to be worshiped.

Jeroboam was sinful. Nevertheless, what Ahab said was, I want to forget about the Lord completely and worship Baal. You know, in his later years, Solomon tragically worshiped pagan gods, but Omri and Ahab were far worse in that they commanded the worship of idols.

It's one thing for the king to worship idols himself. That's bad. It's far worse for the king to command the worship of these pagan idols.

But that probably wasn't the worst thing that he did. What's the worst thing that Ahab did? Marry Jezebel. It tells us right there.

Where is it there in verse 31? He took as a wife Jezebel, the daughter of Beth-Baal, king of the Sidonians, and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Even as the foreign wives of Solomon led to his spiritual downfall, so Ahab's foreign wife Jezebel led him and the nation into deep idolatry. You know what the name of Jezebel's father means? The name Beth-Baal? It means with Baal.

It comes probably from the cultic cry used in the worship of Baal, where they would cry out, Where is Baal? Translated into the Hebrew, the name was also in a verbal pun that the ancient Hebrews loved to do puns. The name Zebel or the word Zebel, do you know what it means in the ancient Hebrew? It means dung. It means manure.

So Jezebel, they loved that name. They made fun of her with it. But this woman Jezebel was nothing funny.

She was a wicked, terrible woman. And it seems that she was the one who pushed the idolatry of Ahab. She was hostile to everything good.

Even though a secular historian would have looked at this and would have applauded at this. What a clever political move for Ahab to marry the daughter of this neighboring kingdom. And it was a great political alliance.

It seemed like the marriage partnership between Tyre and Israel was great for Israel. But yet it was a bad, bad idea because it was a real time when Jezebel and Ahab were going to put a stamp of wickedness upon this northern kingdom of Israel that is going to last for many, many years. And of course, next week, we get into it when we study chapter 17 and study how Elijah, one of these just beacon lights of divine history, one of these great, amazing men, comes on the scene when things are so bad that Ahab and Jezebel are running the show among the ten northern tribes of Israel, then God's going to send a great man named Elijah to do battle against them.

But before we conclude tonight, we have to consider this interesting verse, verse 34. Did you see that? Isn't that kind of strange? It says, In his days Hillel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abraham his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub, he set up its gates according to the word of the Lord, which he had spoken through Joshua, the son of Nun.

If you want to keep a finger there in 1 Kings chapter 16, turn back to Joshua chapter 6, verse 26. Very interesting. After the destruction of Jericho, this is what Joshua said.

Again, it's Joshua chapter 6, verse 26, where we read, Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho. He shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest, he shall set up its gates. That's Joshua 6, 26.

The whole reason for putting this verse here at the end of chapter 16, it isn't just to show us that God is faithful in fulfilling his word. We're supposed to gather that from that, even though it's many centuries later. I mean, this would have to be five or six hundred years after the time of Joshua.

It's a long time, but yet the prophecy was fulfilled. But it seems that Ahab tried to rebuild Jericho in defiance of this curse, and he thought that maybe it could be done, but it could not be done because the man assigned to do the work of rebuilding the city of Jericho had the problem of his sons dying, and we don't know how the sons of Heel died. They may have died as a curse, or they might have been sacrificed by Heel.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of a practice in ancient biblical times called foundation sacrifices, where when they built the foundation of a building or of a wall, they would sacrifice a child, and sometimes they believe place a child alive in the foundation and do it as a ritual sacrifice unto their gods. I don't know if you realize how common child and human sacrifice were among the pagan tribes that populated Canaan at this time. So it may very well be that they did not die under a direct judgment of God.

It may very well be that they were sacrificed unto pagan gods when they were built. Now, listen, what you have here at the end of chapter 16 in verse 24, you have a very merciful warning to Ahab that he ignored. Do you understand what God was saying to Ahab in verse 24? He was shouting to him, You cannot go against my word without paying the price.

This prophecy is 500 years old, yet it was fulfilled, Ahab. You cannot go against my word without paying the price. The Hillel of Bethel, the man you directed to rebuild Jericho, he found this to be true, Ahab.

Take the warning seriously. Yet Ahab did not take the warning seriously. I guess that's a good point for us to conclude on.

You know, God did not God, I believe in his goodness and his grace, he gives us a lot of warnings, doesn't he? You know, you just don't go from walking with the Lord, praise God, hallelujah, to terrible backslidden in one day, do you? No, God gives you a lot of warnings along the way. I think one of the greatest gifts we can have in our Christian life is to do something that Ahab failed in. To listen to the warnings of God.

When God speaks to you and gives you an example, gives you a word, gives you a conviction, gives you something from the scriptures that gives you that warning, you and I, we are duty bound to observe it. I mean, I just think of somebody driving a car and, you know, people are warning them, stop, stop. You know, the policemen stop, the barricades, they crash through them and finally they end up in ruin.

Who does that person have to blame? No one but themselves. If you look back in a period of decline in your spiritual life, you can probably think back to warnings that the Lord gave you. Warnings that you ignored, maybe for a time.

Hopefully you listened to them at some time. But this ability to listen to warnings from the Lord, it's a great gift from him. Ahab didn't.

God went out of his way to show him, my word is going to be fulfilled. Even the word I spoke 500 years previous to this, Ahab, take warning. So what does God do when he's speaking to us and we close our ears against him? What does he do? Well, he usually has a way of speaking a little louder.

And that's what we're going to see next week when we get into Elijah. God's going to speak a little louder to Ahab and to Jezebel. Let's pray.

Father, thank you that you do warn us. I suppose, Lord, that you have no obligation to warn us. But out of your love, out of your mercy, out of your goodness, so often you give us these great warnings and we're very grateful for them.

Well, Father, we ask that you help us to heed your warnings, to listen to them, to understand them, to take them to heart. Your word is true. We see it fulfilled in passages like this.

We see it fulfilled in our life. Help us to take it seriously, Lord. We thank you for your word tonight.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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