



Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri:

The Chaos of Rebellion

Lesson 8

“The way of transgressors is hard.” Proverbs 13:15

Let’s begin by addressing the elephant in the room – this is a lot of kings to cover! Why are we studying so many kings at once? Two reasons. First, Scripture records all of all these kings in only 34 verses (which is well below our average). God has less to say about these kings, in part because of their shorter reigns, which leads us to our second reason. All of these men reigned within 36 years of each other. That is a shorter period than the reign of Asa (41 years). In fact, Asa overlapped with all of these kings! We won’t see this many kings in this short a time period again until the last days of the kingdom of Israel.

Most of the names of these kings are unfamiliar. You may not have even recognized them when you read the title of this lesson. Nothing remarkable stands out about these kings’ lives. Their stories are brief, with a formal introduction and conclusion but little else. But if we look carefully, we find big overall patterns that can be instructive for us.

One of the main themes of this section is the devastation that occurs when we abandon God for our own way. The northern kingdom of Israel rejected the true worship of God as a nation, and the unfolding of her history shows the devastating

consequences of that choice. This is an important lesson for us, because while rejecting God a national level results in national chaos, rejecting God on an individual level results in personal chaos.

How can the rejection of God by many in America be seen to be resulting in chaos? How can the rejection of God by individuals be seen to be resulting in chaos? How are these connected, and how are they distinct?

From roughly 910-874 B.C., we see three dynasties ruling over Israel. These are the dynasties of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Omri. We also see several who fight unsuccessfully for the throne, Zimri and Tibni. In this lesson, we will examine Baasha's Dynasty and then study the civil war that followed his reign, ending with the establishment of Omri's dynasty.

Baasha's Dynasty

I. The beginning of Baasha's dynasty (1 Kings 15:25-32)

Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, only reigned for two years. Other than the standard introductory and summary comments on his reign, the rest of his story consists of his overthrow by his chief general, Baasha.

A. Jeroboam's legacy

Jeroboam is referred to 11 times in 30 verses (1 Kings 15:33-16:28). A few times this refers to the fact that he was the father of Nadab (1 Kings 15:25, 26) or refers to the annihilation of his descendants (1 Kings 15:29), but most of the time it is a reference to the sin that Jeroboam started and all of his followers continued (1 Kings 15:30, 34; 16:2, 3, 7, 19, 26).

B. Baasha's Massacre

We aren't told why it is that Baasha decided to overthrow his master. While Nadab was leading the country in a war against the Philistines, Baasha assassinates him and takes control of the kingdom. He immediately slaughters everyone from the household of Jeroboam so that no one can challenge him for the throne.

Was Baasha right or wrong to conspire against Nadab? If he was wrong, why does Scripture say that what he did fulfilled the word of the Lord (1 Kings 15:29) or that the Lord exalted him (1 Kings 16:2)? How does the end of 1 Kings 16:7 play into this?

II. The end of Baasha's dynasty (1 Kings 15:33-16:7)

Baasha saw God's judgment fall upon Jeroboam for his disobedience and rejection of God's Word. Yet he foolishly committed the same exact sins as his predecessor. For this reason, God warns that he will bring judgment on Baasha's descendants, and he does so swiftly!

A. The prediction of the end of Baasha's dynasty (1 Kings 16:1-4).

The author of Kings frequently includes warnings by the prophets against the kings. We read one such example in the denunciation of Baasha. This denunciation is very close to the denunciation that was given to Jeroboam, at times using the exact same language.

Compare 1 Kings 16:1-4 with 14:7-11. What sections are parallel? Why do you think such close parallels exist?

Why do you think Baasha, who saw God's judgment fall on Jeroboam, sinned in the exact same way and received almost the exact same judgment?

How do we see this same type of thing happening today?

B. The fulfillment of the end of Baasha's dynasty.

Kings points out some interesting overlaps between the assassination of Jeroboam's son, Nadab, and the assassination of Baasha's son, Elah.

Read 1 Kings 15:27-30 and 1 Kings 16:8-15. Compare the revolution started by Baasha and the revolution attempted by Zimri. Where are they similar? Where are they different?

This section shows us the deterioration of the nation of Israel. Jeroboam overthrew his master; Baasha overthrew his; and Zimri overthrew his. Yet with each revolution, the nation gets a little weaker. Shortened reigns, political instability and uncertainty, and national treachery become the standard fare of the day. In all of this, men live by their own wisdom instead of God's and bring ruin and disaster upon themselves.

The Civil War

The overthrow of Elah, the son of Baasha, led to a brief period of chaos for the northern kingdom. Zimri tried to do what Baasha did, but failed. After he was defeated two generals, Omri and Tibni, fought for control over Israel for several years. Eventually, Tibni died and Israel settled on Omri as king.

I. Zimri's reign (1 Kings 16:15-20)

Zimri has the shortest reign in the history of Israel and Judah – only reigning 7 days. He committed the same act of treason that his former king, Baasha did. While Baasha was able to secure power and become the new king, Zimri's attempt was viewed as treasonous and resulted in Omri leading the military to overthrow Zimri.

Given the youth of the Elah (who only reigned for two years), it's likely that Zimri had been appointed by Baasha and possible that he could remember Baasha overthrew Nadab. Zimri had seen a successful overthrow of the king, and so he too attempted to overthrow the ruling dynasty when he saw weakness on the part of the king.

Why do you think it was that Baasha's revolution worked while Zimri's resulted in his demise?

Why would God include 16:19 when Zimri only reigned for seven days?

II. Tibni's reign (1 Kings 16:21-22)

We know almost nothing about Tibni. During the power vacuum that was formed when the king was murdered and

then his assassin was quickly deposed, Tibni vied with Omri for rule of the country. In the end, Tibni died, and Omri became the undisputed king of Israel.

III. Omri's reign (1 Kings 16:23-28)

Omri is another king we know very little about. He is the one who moves the capital of Israel to Samaria, where it will be for the rest of the northern kingdom. We find out that he, too, is an evil king. In fact, Kings goes so far as to claim that he did worse than all the kings before him. Yet, Omri sets up what will become one of the most powerful and influential dynasties in the northern kingdom. Our story ends with a somewhat ominous note: Omri's son Ahab reigns in his place.

Conclusion

As we conclude, it will be helpful for us to draw some larger principles from what we have studied this far.

I. The consequences of our decisions multiply across the generations.

Jeroboam's decision had a compounding effect on future generations. We are reminded over and over that Jeroboam made Israel to sin, and that others followed his footsteps. This should be a sobering reminder to all of us that the choices we make will not only affect us, but those who follow us as well.

In what ways could our decisions affect those who come after us?

II. Rebellion leads to chaos.

Israel's rebellion against God leads to their rebellion against their own masters. This situation spirals until absolute chaos breaks out in the form of a civil war. When we rebel against God and against his established authorities, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

How did Jeroboam sow the seeds of the rebellion that ended up destroying his own line?

What caused the chaos to finally settle down, at least temporarily in the northern kingdom?

III. God is the perfect judge.

As we finish looking at this section, several important truths about God's judgment stand out from this section.

A. God's judgment is certain.

One of the major themes of the books of Kings and Chronicles is the fact that God's judgment is inevitable. When God says something will happen, you can be sure it will happen. The prophetic Word of the Lord will surely come to pass.

Why do you think the kings ignored these prophets, after seeing so clearly that God was speaking through them?

How do people today behave similarly?

B. God's judgment in his own time.

Both Baasha and Jeroboam were warned and given a chance to turn. They both went to the grave without giving up their sins. Their sons only reigned for two years before receiving the judgment God had promised. Zimri only reigned for seven days before being judged by God!

How should this truth affect us today?

C. God's judgment is always fair.

We might be tempted to look at certain aspects of these stories and wonder if God was justified in what he did.

Why did God judge some kings more severely than others? Why did Zimri only rule 7 days, when Baasha reigned 24 years? Why was the most wicked king of Israel the one who had a dynasty?

In the end, we must remember that God is God, and that his way is always right. We must also be careful not to fall into the trap of judging fairness just by what we see here on this earth. God will one day make all things right, but that day has not come yet.

Kings holds up an uncomfortable mirror. It shows us men behaving in ways that at first seem patently insane. How could anyone watch God's judgment fall repeatedly on those who reject him and ignore his words, only to then turn around and reject God and ignore his words? "What makes you the exception?" we find ourselves asking. But even as we ask the question, we feel the prick of the Holy Spirit. It's easy to see the insanity and chaos that rebellion brings when we see it in the lives of others. It's a whole lot easier to justify in our own lives.