



LESSONS

FROM THE KINGS

A BIBLE STUDY
ON THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

PART 2 - THE DIVISION IS ESTABLISHED

King Rehoboam	4
Good Idea; Bad Idea.....		5
Fortified, But Failing.....		6
Learning Your Lesson -the Hard Way.....		7

King Jeroboam I	8
“It Is Too Much for You to Go Up to Jerusalem”.....		9
Now That’s Embarrassing.....		10
Looking In The Right Place for the Wrong Reason.....		11

King Abijah	12
Doctrine and Practice.....		13

King Asa	14
Shaking Things Up for the Better.....		15
What Do You Really Rely On?.....		16
Keep the Revival Alive.....		17
Reform Includes All of Your Own Heart Too.....		18

King Nadab	19
The First “Like Father, Like Son” in Israel.....		19

King Baasha	20
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I'm Gonna Build a Great Big Wall.....21



King Elah23

Dead in a Drunken Stupor23



King Zimri24

Like a Puff of Smoke.....24



King Tibni25

Factions and Further Wars.....25



King Omri26

A Rough Start to a Sinful Dynasty.....26



King Ahab27

KING REHOBOAM

Rehoboam became king at age forty-one and ruled for seventeen years. The influence of his father Solomon and his mother (an Ammonite) were evident in his life. He is much like the antithesis of America's Abraham Lincoln -he sets out to reunite a divided country but fails with foolish tactics. There is much idolatry during his reign in Judah -but still some good remained.

GOOD IDEA; BAD IDEA

Leadership calls for hard decisions. Have you ever reached a difficult fork in the road where one decision was right and the other proved tragically wrong, but you only discovered that truth too late?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 12:1-24 Describe how the split came about between Judah and the rest of Israel.
- 2) What do we learn from Rehoboam's approach toward making decisions?
- 3) How might the lessons learned here apply to the way a Christian congregation's leadership functions?
- 4) Identify in this section two good and two bad things done by leaders when they are confronted by the people they lead.
- 5) When is forceful leadership necessary? When should leadership yield to the demands of those they lead? What's the best course of action when reaching a difficult fork in the road?
- 6) A yoke is a frequent picture in scripture for something you are made to submit under. Contrast the yoke of Rehoboam with the yoke of our King, Jesus. (Matthew 11:28-29).

FORTIFIED, BUT FAILING

We don't always brace ourselves for the right type of threat. If you faced a threat which might destroy your home what would you most likely be doing to prepare? What threats would you brace for if you lived in...California, ...the Florida Coast?

- 1) Rehoboam didn't prepare for every danger as he ought. Read 2 Chronicles 11:1-17 Evaluate the situation when Rehoboam becomes king. What would you expect the spiritual situation to be like in Judah and Benjamin at this time?

- 2) Consider what a sacrifice the priest and Levites had to make in order to be faithful to the Lord at this time. We also see those in Israel who were set on following the Lord left to go to Judah. What type of "strengthening" would you expect to find referred to in 2 Chronicles 11:17: physical or spiritual? Which was more necessary at this time?

- 3) According to 2 Chronicles 12:1 what type of "strengthening" apparently didn't occur?

- 4) How might we sometimes miss the real dangers when caught up in preparing for ordinary dangers?

- 5) Describe what our King Jesus wants those who "seek the Lord" to do to be prepared for life's challenges. (Matthew 6:32-34)

LEARNING YOUR LESSON -THE HARD WAY

Rehoboam only seems to listen to the Lord's prophecy after something bad has happened to him. Rehoboam had already lost most of Israel due to his Father's unfaithfulness to the Lord. Now he feared a new threat.

- 1) Read 2 Chronicles 12. Describe the consequences Rehoboam faced for his and Judah's unfaithfulness to the Lord?
- 2) Why does God still give Rehoboam consequences for his unfaithfulness even after Rehoboam and the leaders repented? (Consider what Rehoboam's father King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 3:11-12)
- 3) God does sometimes send bad things our way to lead us to humbly repent. Can you think of any examples?
- 4) Why doesn't repentance always remove sins' consequences?
- 5) What does true repentance always bring? (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)
- 6) For further discussion: What important truth is stressed from here on by listing the mother of each king and her spiritual background?

KING JEROBOAM I

God had determined that Solomon's line would not keep its rule over all of Israel. (1 Kings 11:26-40) This happened immediately upon Solomon's death (1 Kings 12:20).

Jeroboam is the only king described as formerly being a "servant" to another King. His establishment of a new order of worship and the support of golden calf worship led to the people being ensnared by the sexual immorality historically connected to golden calf worship.

His rule was for twenty-two years. God had promised Jeroboam security and a long line that would continue after him if he followed the Lord. (1 Kings 11:36-38) Nonetheless, Jeroboam didn't trust in the Lord for security and turned to his own devices.

Fifteen kings after him are described as being evil "like Jeroboam." His dynasty is short, but its impact continues long after.

“IT IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO GO UP TO JERUSALEM”

How would you picture your church responding if some minor changes were made to worship such as service times and type of seating? What if there were some big changes? What ought to be the driving reason behind any worship change?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 12:25-33. Jeroboam knew you needed more than fortifications to command people's hearts. Do you suppose Jeroboam was setting out to create a new false religion or saw himself as merely making modifications which improved worship? What drove him to make these changes?
- 2) List some possible reasons/excuses why the people of Israel might have been so ready to accept the modifications to their worship life.
- 3) Agree/disagree: Some worship life changes are really good and necessary.
- 4) What dangers ought we to watch out for when “progressive” changes are made against God's word?
- 5) What did the prophets, Christ, and the apostles say about true worship and future worship changes? (Isaiah 66:2b, John 4:21, Colossians 2:16-17, John 10:16, 1 Timothy 4:16)

NOW THAT'S EMBARRASSING

If your pastor was invited to a banquet at a church that taught false doctrine, what reasons might he have for declining that offer? Sometimes you have to avoid giving the impression that those who hold to false teachings are in the right. But disassociating yourself from false teaching isn't always so easy to do. Read 1 Kings 13:1-10

- 1) Review: list the two miracles/signs and describe the message from the unnamed prophet. What impact should this message have had on Jeroboam?
- 2) What things in this account would have greatly embarrassed the King? What really would have irked him and made him think even more after he was healed?
- 3) How seriously do you suppose Jeroboam would have taken the message if the prophet had not only healed him in mercy, but joined him in a friendly meal and taken a gift?
- 4) Explain why correct fellowship practices are necessary for warning others against the dangers of false teachings.
- 5) What things do you see in this section which displays God's mercy for the sinner?

LOOKING IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THE WRONG REASON

List a few right and wrong reasons why people read the Bible or consult with Christian pastors and teachers.

- 1) Read 1 Kings 14:1-18. Why did Jeroboam want to consult Ahijah, a true prophet from Judah?

- 2) Identify a few reasons why Jeroboam would not have wanted to consult Ahijah by himself and sent his wife in disguise. What sort of "disguise" might we want to put on when our guilt bothers us or we don't feel we have God's favor.

- 3) Sometimes people will come to a faithful church looking for help. What things might prevent them from wanting to come to that church? What might motivate them to still come to a Christian church?

- 4) There is more than "bad news" (the law) offered to sinners who come to a faithful church. Explain.

- 5) What are some ways to motivate people to come to a faithful church looking for the right thing?

KING ABIJAH

Abijah was the son of Rehoboam's favored wife. He is the first "like father, like son" in Judah's line of kings.

Abijah ruled Judah for a mere three years during Jeroboam's rule over Israel. Everything we know about him is only recorded in 1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chronicles 13:1 - 14:1.

He sounds promising, but doesn't live up to his confession:
"Do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed."

DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

Read 2 Chronicles 13. Summarize the main points of Abijah's appeal and argument for the people of Israel to repent.

- 1) Evaluate Abijah's apparent spiritual standing on the basis of this account.

- 2) To see what further happened with him refer to 1 Kings 15:1-4. We see that God didn't bless Abijah for his own faithfulness. Abijah was faithless. What was really behind Abijah's military success?

- 3) What glimmer of hope lies in the background of Abijah's speech and the battle?

- 4) How does the church still today sometimes talk one way about the Lord but live another?

- 5) Abijah slams the easy route which Jeroboam established for becoming a priest in Israel. Why was it so important that someone be properly qualified before serving as priest? What qualifications does your church have set up for those who serve as pastors and teachers?

- 6) Explain why we must often make use of the phrase "doctrine *and* practice."

KING ASA

King Asa ruled in Judah for 41 years. He did not come from a family of believers. Yet he trusted in the Lord. He brought revival and turned people back to the Lord and away from false worship.

During Asa's long reign as king in Judah there were two major periods of spiritual renewal. Meanwhile, the northern kingdom struggles with spiritual decay and changes rulers seven times.

Asa's rule is blessed mostly with peace. He does, however, face two major military threats. The Lord tests his faith. One crisis he handles well, the other not so well.

The Scriptures record two lapses by Asa near the end of his life. The effects of one of these spiritual lapses by Asa plagues Judah for many decades through the nation of Syria.

Nonetheless, the positive lasting effects are evident for generations after Asa. Despite his two recorded failures he is ultimately praised for serving the Lord and turning the people away from idols.

We learn from him the importance of continuing to rely on the Lord when facing a crisis.

To read the accounts of Asa:

- *1 Kings 15:9-24;*
- *2 Chronicles 14 - 16*

SHAKING THINGS UP FOR THE BETTER

Have you ever sought out to upset and change the status-quo? What made it hard for you to do that?

- 1) Read 1 Kings 15:9-15 This is the first recorded spiritual revival effort during the time of the Kings. Appraise Asa's efforts by listing his good spiritual accomplishments and what would have made them tough to carry out.
- 2) What additional details does 2 Chronicles 14:4 add to Asa's reform efforts for the people of Judah?
- 3) Consider all the sins of secret idolatry. What "idols" might God's people today need to confront and remove or destroy? What might make it difficult to act against these things or people in our lives?
- 4) What motivated Asa and still motivates us to turn aside from and remove all false worship?

Note: Asa may be credited in 1 Chronicles 14 with removing the high places of false worship, but he did not altogether remove every high place as he ought (1 Kings 15:14; 2 Chronicles 15:17). These left-over high places most likely refer to high places which were in place for worshipping the Lord. God still did not approve of this type of worship which emulated some Canaanite practices and segregated God's lock.

WHAT DO YOU REALLY RELY ON?

As we grow in strength, wealth, or power, it can be easy to focus solely on those things for success.

- 1) List some accounts in Scripture when God's people overcame overwhelming odds. Read 2 Chronicles 14:7-15 While very strong, how did Asa's army compare to the Cushite invaders?

- 2) Identify the statements in Asa's prayer which we also hold to firmly in faith.

- 3) Explain how we can say that God has already answered this same prayer for us.

- 4) How does sharing the same attitude behind Asa's prayer change your outlook on the spiritual battles faced by your congregation, your family, and you yourself?

- 5) Explain how God still daily continues to answer this prayer in our lives.

KEEP THE REVIVAL ALIVE

Have you ever started a Bible reading plan, a Bible class, or starting out in a good direction for spiritual strengthening, but found your plan needed a boost after some time? What would have helped you stay the course longer?

- 1) Read 2 Chronicles 15. Describe and characterize the spiritual revival that took place after the prophet reminded Asa of the Lord's blessings.

- 2) Why so extreme? (See Exodus 22:20) What measures of reform do many Christians today consider "too extreme" and therefore not often carry out?

- 3) Why should we also be urged to continually take spiritual reform in our church, family, and our own lives seriously despite the constant challenges?

- 4) Asa is encouraged to continue strong in his efforts to reform Judah. What lies behind our efforts to work hard in the Lord's kingdom to strengthen it? (1 Corinthians 15:58).

- 5) What things can we do to encourage ongoing spiritual reform in our lives, our family, and our church family?

REFORM INCLUDES ALL OF YOUR OWN HEART TOO

Name at least three people in the Bible who appear nearly all good, yet we still see how they struggled with an old-self and a heart prone to sin.

- 1) Read 2 Chronicles 16 to see a glimpse of Asa's blemished record. What made his alliance wrong?

- 2) Evaluate Asa's response when confronted about his sin. How can we sometimes "shoot the messenger" and end up acting this way when we are confronted for our sin?

- 3) There is only one perfect King. Asa was both sinner and saint through faith in his Savior God. He is credited with serving the Lord in faithfulness. "Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life." (1 Kings 15:14b) Yet he too fell into sin. Why should we not be surprised if a leader of God's people stumbles into sin and even becomes stubbornly stuck?

- 4) How does keeping our focus on Jesus as our king help us appropriately handle and deal with erring leaders.

- 5) In light of our constant failure to perfectly reform even our own hearts, why does God still bless us?

KING NADAB

THE FIRST “LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON” IN ISRAEL

Nadab ruled for a mere two years. Everything we know about him is only recorded in 1 Kings 15:21-30.

He became King after there was already a good king (Asa) in Judah for two whole years. Nadab's brother (Ahijah) had already died as a sign of God's judgment. His family had a prophecy that all of them would die for their sins. Yet he “walked in the ways of his father and in his sin.” (1 Kings 15:26)

- 1) What does Nadab's blind rebellion to the Lord impress on you? Why does a sinner still persist in sin even after he is warned severely on numerous occasions?
- 2) Can you recall any other examples of rulers who had the warning of God's judgment, saw their world crumbling, but didn't repent? What does this tell you about the condition of the unregenerate heart of mankind?
- 3) In what ways might we be tempted to ignore all the warning signs when we are holding onto a sin?
- 4) Read Joshua 24:2-3 to see how the cycle of father-to-son false worship is brought to an end.

KING BAASHA

Baasha ruled for twenty four years starting three years after Asa's rule began in Judah. Little is known of his origin. He fought with Nadab and was likely a commander in his army. He became king by killing Nadab during the fighting and proclaiming himself king over Israel. He fulfilled the prophecy that Jeroboam's line would end. Though he was "brought up from the dust" to become king he did not serve the Lord. His line ended with the short reign of his son.

Accounts of Basha's rule: 1 Kings 15:16 - 16:13; 2
Chronicles 16:1-6

I'M GONNA BUILD A GREAT BIG WALL

Recall how Jeroboam tried to stop Israel from going over to Judah? Read 1 Kings 15:17 and 2 Chronicles 16:1 to discover Baasha's tactic to stop emigration to Judah. This would probably have served a dual purpose against Judah, but it ironically failed in the end and worked in Judah's favor.

Baasha's efforts to block out travel between Israel and Judah were to block interaction between Jerusalem and his people. This was the same plan held by Jeroboam. Baasha only added a fortified wall to the efforts. This would have meant the prophets from Judah could still speak to the people of Israel.

- 1) Review once more the account of the wall in 2 Chronicles 16:1-7 and note what God caused to happen on the opposite northern border area for Baasha and Israel.
- 2) Baasha relied on human strength to accomplish godless endeavors. What literal barriers today are sometimes placed in the way to stop people from leaving godless nations or from entering nations which have the gospel freely proclaimed?
- 3) How does God still bring his Word today in nations hostile to the gospel which prohibit international travel?
- 4) What efforts will our spiritual enemy advance to halt the growth of God's kingdom? Read Matthew 16:15-18 and describe why we need not turn to human resources (recall Asa's response to the fortifications of Baasha) for our confidence.

Note on Baasha's timeline: according to timeline 1 Kings 15:33 Baasha begin in the third year of Asa's reign, and he ruled for twenty-four years. However, 2 Ch 16:1 reads "In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah." Baasha died ten years earlier than 2 Ch 16:1 indicates. Some suggest that the years listed for Asa in 2 Chr 16:1 should be counted back down the line from the time of the kingdom split. There is, however, no compelling reason to support this method of reconciling the dates. Others note that a co-regency, perhaps sometimes unnamed, would also offset numbers of years a king ruled. Another less likely yet possible explanation: the Greek Septuagint contains a variant here that reads "Thirty-eighth" year. Although that doesn't in of itself solve the issue it might point to a possible confusion or hand coping error in recording this number from its manuscript at some point. The editors of the Hebrew Bible refer to another Greek Septuagint variation that indicates it might have actually read "thirtieth year of his reign."

All other discrepancies in the timeline of the Kings has been reconciled by scholars. This fact itself is remarkable. Some other apparent timeline discrepancies for the kings have had solid explanations offered with dating and ancient methods of time reckoning taken into account. This one seemingly off-set timeline, however, still remains with no single best explanation.

KING ELAH

DEAD IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR

Elah only ruled for a brief time hardly over a year and was assassinated by Zimiri. Zimiri then went on to snuff out all rivals from Baasha's family. This fulfilled the word of the prophet Hanini that Baasha's line would end.

- 1) You can find his brief account in 1 Kings 16:6-14 How would Elah best be characterized? What should his terrible fate of dying in his sin impress on today's reader?
- 2) God uses wickedness for his purpose of punishing wickedness. Prophecy was fulfilled here by a wicked man. For more on God's use of wicked men for his purpose see Acts 2:23.
- 3) Describe what comfort you have in knowing the strife of the wicked world is still going to accomplish God's purposes in the end.

KING ZIMRI

LIKE A PUFF OF SMOKE

Zimri, king of Israel, was an army commander in charge of half of Elah's chariots. He had planned and successfully carried out an assassination of the King he served. His victory was short-lived and his plan was short-sighted. Seven days later the Israelites proclaimed the commander of the army, Omri, king instead of Zimri the lesser commander of the chariots. The army of Omri surrounded the city which Zimri was in and Zimri burned himself alive in his palace. His brief account is in 1 Kings 16:9-20

Zimri tried to snatch the throne, but failed to secure it in the end. God's with his providence will allow the plans of men to only go so far until it fails them.

- 1) Consider the climate and circumstances in which he came to his short-lived position of power. What factors might have contributed to his decision to commit a horrendous suicide?
- 2) What comforting reminder does this account give us when you see the turmoil between nations and rulers today?

KING TIBNI

FACTIONS AND FURTHER WARS

Picture the turmoil caused by the successive attacks and deaths of King Elah and King Zimri.

Tibni and Omri contented for the throne at the same time. Tibni had half the population support him.

- 1) Compare 1 Kings 16:15 & 1 Kings 16:23 to calculate how long the civil war between Tibni and Omri lasted.
- 2) His brief account is in 1 Kings 16:21-22. Little else is known about him.
- 3) Describe the picture we are beginning to see of the northern kingdom at this point in time. How does this type of strife and turmoil reflect what takes place in every human heart?
- 4) Christ our king is the only lasting ruler who can and will bring us peace. Contrast his method of life and becoming our exalted king with the methods we've recently studied.

KING OMRI

A ROUGH START TO A SINFUL DYNASTY

Omri is the first in line of a short but very wicked dynasty.

He came to power at a very turbulent time in Israel.

He was the commander of the army under King Elah. After Elah is assassinated he worked fast to dethrone the assassin, Zimri. After four years' struggle with Tibni for the throne he comes to full power over Israel. He establishes Samaria as the new capital of Israel. He is the father and grandfather of kings of Israel who were unsurpassed in evil.

He supported Jeroboam's golden calf cult worship and thus "Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him." (1 Kings 16:25)

His account is found in 1 Kings 16:16-28

KING AHAB

Ahab is one of the most prominent kings who ruled over Israel. The prophet Elijah is sent to Israel during his reign. Ahab married the daughter of the King of Sidon, Jezebel. She is an instigator and force behind her husband that prods on further evil. He resorts to sulking and pouting while she acts to make sure Ahab comes out on top.

Ahab added to Jeroboam's sin of the golden calf by serving Baal and setting up Asherah poles.

The account of Ahab can be found in 1 Kings 16:28 - 22:40;
2 Chronicles 18



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