

1 Kings 15-16

The Kings of Judah

Once the text finishes with the stories of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, we settle into the normal pattern of the Kings, where the writer bounces back and forth between Israel and Judah, giving us the highlights of the kings' reigns and then an evaluation if they did evil in the sight of the Lord or did right in the eyes of the Lord.

We begin in Judah with Abijah who was the son of Rehoboam. He was a king for only three years but he continued to do the evil that his father had started. He was in constant warfare with the northern kingdom of Israel. The most important verse is 15:4 where the writer tells us that the kingdom endures and Jerusalem remained strong for the sake of David so his lamp would continue to burn in Judah. In other words, in spite of the sin of the kings, God is honoring his promise to David because he is doing something greater in Jerusalem. The lamp that continues to burn is the covenant – the Promise – of a coming seed of David that will rule forever.

The next king in Judah is Asa the son of Abijah. Asa rules for 41 years and he is fully committed to the Lord as was his father David. He begins the process of expelling shrine prostitutes, he got rid of the idols, and he deposed his grandmother who was the queen mother, a position of influence in the court. She was an evil and influential woman and he removed her. He also worked to restore the splendor of silver and gold articles to the temple of the LORD.

Baasha, King in Israel was in the process of fortifying Ramah, which is on the border between Israel and Judah because he is trying to control trade and prevent anyone from coming to Jerusalem to worship. With these fortifications on his border it places the smaller kingdom of Judah in danger. In a diplomatic and military maneuver, Asa takes amassed gold and silver and uses it to pay a bribe to the king of Aram so that he would put pressure on Israel from the North. This he did and conquered most of the northern territory of what we know as Galilee. This forces Baasha to abandon his fortifications in the south to concentrate on defending the north. Asa then goes and takes the materials from Ramah and fortifies two cities in Benjamin to protect Judah from Northern aggression.

The Kings of Israel

Now, in verse 25 we switch to the Northern kingdom of Israel. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam becomes king. He reigns for 2 years and does evil in the eyes of the Lord. Baasha, of the tribe of Issachar plots against the king and brings the dynasty of Jeroboam to a quick and bloody conclusion. He murdered the entire family of Jeroboam to insure that no one would assert a right to the throne. This, of course, fulfills the prophesy against the house of Jeroboam because of his decision to not follow the Lord and take all of Israel away from God, following man's way.

16:1-4 is significant because it places this bloody coup in perspective. The Lord used Baasha to bring about the prophesied destruction of the house of Jeroboam, and God raised him up from no where to do this – giving him a chance to follow God's way but

he follows man's way just like Jeroboam's family did so the same fate will befall him and his house. Baasha will rule for 24 years then he died and was replaced by his son Elah, who ruled for 2 years. Zimri, who was the commander of the king's chariots, plotted against the king and killed him and then massacred all of his family, just as Baasha had done to the family of Jeroboam. This all happened to fulfill the prophesy against the house of Baasha. Zimri only lasted 7 DAYS when he was plotted against by the army and they placed their commander on the throne, Omri. Omri's forces surrounded Zimri in his palace and he set the palace on fire and killed himself. There was a struggle for the throne and the kingdom was divided for a couple of years until Omri proved the stronger and took control.

Omri and his dynasty was probably the strongest politically in the northern kingdom but they are not given much time because they were evil and took the Northern kingdom to the point of no return spiritually. Omri will be the king who builds the official capital of Israel, SAMARIA. Omri reasserted control over his northern territories in Galilee and all the way to Dan. He also forged trading relationships with the Phoenicians which would lead to his son marrying the daughter of Ethbaal the king of the Sidonians. Her name was Jezebel! Ahab, Omri's son will reign in Samaria for 22 years and follows his father's pattern of doing evil in the eyes of the Lord. By bringing Jezebel into Israel the worship of Baal is established in the land. It is also under Ahab that Jericho is rebuilt, the people were commanded not to rebuild the city after the conquest and because of that prohibition, the writer tells us that it cost him two of his sons.

What do we see in this section?

The kings are doing what they want to do. They are acting like the world around them, not like the people of God. They are trusting in their own power, alliances, political skill and not in the LORD. As a result they incur the wrath of God when they could have had his blessing. We should learn from their mistakes. Man's way leads away from God and toward our own destruction. The only king that is blessed with success in his reign in ASA because he is faithful to the LORD. Omri was successful from a worldly standpoint but the text does not tell us because his success was negated by his godlessness and poor example to the people.