

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 KINGS 14-16

Pandora's box is a classic tale in Greek mythology...

The first woman "*Pandora*" was given a box, and orders that it was not to be opened. But the ole girl allowed her curiosity to get the best of her. Inside the box were all the evils and miseries that exist in the world today. When she popped the top she unleashed the hideous suffering that has besieged humanity ever since.

Well, King Solomon opened Pandora's box for the nation Israel.

During the reigns of David and Solomon Israel reached unprecedented heights. The Hebrew kingdom dominated the world. But after Solomon's sin the nation was never the same. King Solomon was fond of exotic women. He filled his harem with foreign honeys who introduced him to false gods. Soon idolatry filled Jerusalem.

Though the book of Ecclesiastes may indicate Solomon repented toward the end of his life – nevertheless, the damage was done. Pandora's box had been opened.

For the rest of Hebrew history the nation struggles with the sin of idolatry.

It took just one generation after Solomon for Civil War to rock the kingdom. The Davidic dynasty reined in Jerusalem, over the southern tribe of Judah. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, sat on the throne. But the northern tribes, or Israel, rallied around a man named Jeroboam – a man who committed a

dastardly deed.

Rather than encourage his people to worship in Jerusalem according to God's Law. He worried their trips south would reforge an alliance with the king of Judah. He didn't want to lose Israel's allegiance – so he created an alternative religion.

He sat up golden calves in Dan and Bethel – both places within his own borders. He made his own sacrifices, and priesthood, and feast days.

It was a religion of convenience and compromise. It was politically inspired – not divinely inspired. As far as God was concerned Jeroboam's sin was idolatry.

And as a result, in chapter 14 God's judgment falls on the house of Jeroboam.

Verse 1, “At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I would be king over this people.”

Back when Solomon was king, Ahijah predicted that the kingdom would be ripped from Solomon - and Jeroboam would ascend to the throne of Israel. Obviously, Ahijah's prophecy proved true.

Now maybe Ahijah can predict the outcome of his son's illness.

The king sends his wife on an undercover mission to inquire of the prophet. It's odd, though the king expects the Prophet to see into the future – it doesn't dawn on him, if he can see into the future he can see through a flimsy disguise.

He tells his wife “Also take with you 10 loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will become of the child.” And Jeroboam's wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age.” Maybe cataracts.

This time the prophet was an old man – a seer who could no longer see.

“Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Here is the wife of Jeroboam, coming to ask you something about her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman."

Ahijah didn't need to see. His decisions weren't based on sight. He relied on the *voice* of God - not his *vision*. The old prophet walked by faith not by sight.

“And so it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps as she came through the door, he said, (A Hi Ya, doing) "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another person? For I have been sent to you with bad news.

Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes; but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have

cast Me behind your back - therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free...”

Jeroboam will be cut-off from his subjects. He'll cease to rule.

The Hebrew word translated in verse 10 as “male” means “one that urinates against the wall”. The OKJV translates verse 10... “I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall...”

After potty training 3 boys this is also how my wife identifies the male species.

“I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone.” I'll take out Jeroboam like a bag of stinking trash.

“The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the LORD has spoken!” The only memorial to be named after Jeroboam's son will be a brand of dog food.

And in addition a prophet gives Mrs. Jeroboam one more ominous warning... “Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die.” If she was a true believer she would've never gone back home.

Ahijah's words to the woman continue in verse 13, “And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave (or die a peaceful death), because in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.” 1 Kings 15:29, informs us the rest of Jeroboam's family dies violently

in the aftermath of a bloody coup.

But notice, Jeroboam's son, Abijah is spared violence by a peaceful death.

An innocent child was the only good God could find in the house of Jeroboam, so rather than allow the boy to grow up under his dad's evil influence, and reap its judgment, God went ahead and took him. Death spared a corrupting influence and a torturous death. *This sheds light on one of the OT's most troublesome issues...*

When God ordered Israel's conquest of Canaan - over and over Joshua is told to take no prisoners – no survivors – slaughter the women and children, as well as the soldiers. We read that, and think God is being brutal and barbaric, but we forget how hideously corrupt, and defiled Canaanite culture had become.

They were characterized by dark occultism and animalistic lewdness.

Obviously, this is a call only God in His wisdom can make, but He spared the Canaanite children from moral corruption and eternal damnation by their mass extermination. It was a severe mercy on God's part – just as it is here.

Verse 14, **“Moreover the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now!**

For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River (Euphrates, on the border with Assyria), because they have

made their wooden images, provoking the LORD to anger. And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin."

The demise of the northern kingdom culminates in 722 BC when the Assyrian empire sacks Samaria, Israel's capitol, and scatters the tribes among the nations.

If you want to flash ahead 200 years - 2 Kings 17 records Israel's final days.

Verse 17 takes us back to the present. "Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed, and came to Tirzah. When she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel." 2 Chronicles 13:20 says of Jeroboam, "the LORD struck him, and he died."

Verse 20 "The period that Jeroboam reigned was 22 years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place."

Though Jeroboam reined just 22 years, his evil influence lasted 2½ centuries.

From 1 Kings 14 through 2 Kings 17 the author of the history flip-flops back and forth between the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Nineteen kings rule Israel – *and none of them please the Lord*. That's zero, zip, zilch – nada. Of 19 kings not one

pleases God, largely thanks to Jeroboam.

Once a woman had twins, and gave both boys up for adoption. One son was adopted by an Egyptian family, who named him “*Amal*”. The other was adopted by a family in Spain who named him “*Juan*”. Years later, Juan sent his birth mother a picture. She remarked to her husband how she wished she had a picture of Amal.

Her husband reminded her the boys were twins, “**Honey, if you’ve seen Juan, you’ve seen Amal.**” That’s how it was with the kings of Israel. All 19 were goons.

Twenty kings reign over Judah, the southern kingdom - only 8 gain the Lord’s approval. But those 8 kings kept Judah going 135 years after the fall of Israel.

1 Kings 14:21 shifts south....

“And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king. He reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there.” The Temple was the embodiment of God’s name - the place that reflected His nature.

“His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess.” His mom was a pagan – and the mention of her here may explain the actions of Rehoboam. He’d watched his father, Solomon, worship at the pagan altars, and he follows in his footsteps.

If you’re a father remember your son is also *watching where you worship*.

“Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they pro-

voked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree...”

Rather than worship the one true God they worshipped idols.

Rather than worship in the one sanctioned place, and in God’s prescribed manner - they set up illegal altars - or high places - all over town.

Perhaps you remember the famous Cold War incident involving Korean Airlines Flight 007. The flight was headed from Anchorage to Seoul, and was carried 269 passengers and 29 crew members. After lift-off the plane was put on autopilot.

But a small mistake in the flight path caused a tragic disaster. A few degrees error at lift-off caused the plane to end up 310 miles off course in the end.

The Soviets shot it from the sky, and it crashed into the sea. God knew the same dangers applied to spiritual matters. You can be a few degrees off in the beginning – continue on the projected course – and end up in serious error by the end. This is why God’s Law centralized worship. A single Temple and priesthood was a safeguard against man’s tendency to stray.

“And there were also perverted persons in the land.” Many of the idols Judah adopted were fertility gods. “Perverted persons” were male prostitutes that performed their lewd acts in association with the worship of these gods.

“They did according to all the abominations of the nations

which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”

Judah became as evil as the Canaanites.

500 years after possessing Canaan, and driving out the pagans that defiled the land - the Israelites were embroiled in the same sins God used them to judge.

Verse 25 “It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything.”

Solomon stockpiled great wealth. Now after only 5 years it's gone. 2 Chronicles describes Shishak's raid and Judah's response in more detail. We'll save it until we get there. Egyptian archeology sets the date of this invasion as 925 BC.

“He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made.” 1 Kings 10:16 mentions 500 golden shields – 200 large, 300 small. The shields were more ornamental than practical. Gold is too heavy and too soft to be used in combat.

These shields showed-off Solomon's wealth. He was “the king of the bling.”

But here's the revealing detail... Neither Rehoboam nor any other Jewish king made any attempt to retrieve the shields. King Rehoboam is content to replace them with inferior substitutes. “Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, who guarded the doorway of the king's house. And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the guards carried them, then brought them back into the guard-

room...”

Here’s Judah’s decline in a nutshell – from gold to bronze in five years.

There’s some symbolism in this story that I believe applies to the church. Gold represents God’s work. Man plays no part in the manufacture of gold. Whereas, bronze is an alloy of zinc and copper – it’s the result of a man-made process.

Here is what’s happened today in many quarters of the church. God’s work – His timeless Word and the Spirit’s supernatural power - is being replaced with man-made processes. Gold is gone, and we’ve become content with bronze!

Churches try to grow through gimmicks, and self-constructed formulas, and the latest marketing techniques – rather than rely on the golden power of God. The church may succeed, but they end up with an inferior, flimsy foundation.

It’s time for church leaders to be courageous enough to storm the gates of the enemy, and take back the golden shields that have been stolen from us.

Verse 29 “Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.

So Rehoboam rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess.

Then Abijam his son reigned in his place.”

1 Kings 15-16 begin the succession of kings after Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

Rehoboam of Judah, died in 913 BC. His son, Abijam, ruled in his place.

“In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. He reigned 3 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom.” Three years was just a blip.

“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.”

Abijam was David's great-grandson, but that's where the relation ended. He followed after his father and grandfather's idols – rather than the God of David.

2 Chronicles 13 tells of the victory God gave Abijam over Jeroboam, but here's how the king thanked God... “Abijah grew mighty, married 14 wives, and begot 22 sons and 16 daughters.” And he only reined 3 years. He was on Solomon's pace.

He too added foreign wives to his harem against God's commandment.

Its interesting Chronicles spells his name “Abijah” or “Yahweh is my father”. The writer of Kings spells it “Abijam” or “Yam is my father.” Yam was a Canaanite sea-god. It's possible he started a true believer, but was corrupted by his wives.

“Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem” Three generations later God is still

blessing Israel for David's sake. David still has a witness. God blesses David "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."

FB Meyer makes an interesting observation, "How long after David's sun had set did the light of his life glimmer over his house! God keeps His covenant and mercy unto thousands of generations. We are probably all inheriting more than we know from the prayers and tears of those who have gone before us."

And notice what David did that made his life so special to God. Verse 5 "David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD." A lot of Christians serve the Lord as long as it serves them too. Biblical morality makes good common sense. The threat of AIDS has made abstinence and monogamy appealing options.

But David did what was right – not necessarily in his eyes – but in the eyes of the Lord. David did the right thing – even when it inconvenienced him.

"And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam." Jeroboam was still king in Israel while Abijam reigned in Judah, so Rehoboam's son inherited the animosity between his father and Jeroboam.

So Abijam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place.” Asa turns out to be a good guy.

“In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah.

And he reigned 41 years in Jerusalem. His grandmother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David. And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.” The “perverted persons” were homosexuals. Male prostitutes that were associated with the Canaanite idolatry.

Asa made a public stand against idolatry and homosexuality.

Asa rightly discerned that these two sins are the most destructive for a society.

They strike at the foundation of civilization. **Idolatry** is an affront to man's most vital relationship – his relationship with God. **Homosexuality** undermines the next most important relationship in society - the union between a husband and a wife.

A society that promotes idolatry and endorses homosexuality is writing its own death certificate. *Without God* there's no *moral foundation* for society, and without *marriage* there's no *social foundation*. Asa had the courage to stand against both.

I like what Asa does in verse 13, “**Also he removed Maachah 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.”

Evidently, both Asa’s parents and grandparents followed after idols.

I know folks who would use that as an excuse. *“I’m the victim of a dysfunctional family.”* So was Asa – his grandma worshipped a lewd image - probably a phallic symbol representing the male organ. How’s that for an ungodly heritage.

Yet King Asa made the commitment to break the chain of family dysfunction. Rather than repeat his parents mistakes, he chose to start anew with God.

Guys, maybe you were abused, because you’re dad was abused, and his dad was abused, and... *wait, stop right there!* You can break the chain. Just because you were abused doesn’t mean you have to be an abuser. The power of the Holy Spirit can set you free. You can overcome a family history, and give your future lineage a new start. Asa did it, and you can do it too. Trust the Lord for help.

Years ago, Morgan Cryer had a song, *Break the Chain*, “Sometimes sin is just a family tradition. It’ll burn the family tree to the ground. Nobody wants to inherit the flames. You sure don’t want to pass them down.” The chorus, “Cut the cord, end the curse, stop the rain. The family sin will do you in; so break the chain.”

The one deficiency on Asa’s report card is in verse 14, “**But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the LORD all his days.**”

As you study the kings of Israel some of the bad kings did a few good things, whereas the good kings made some mistakes. Ultimately they were judged good or bad based on the attitude of their heart toward God. Asa wasn't perfect, but his heart was loyal. And that's what God is looking for in us – *not perfection, but devotion*. Even when our feet stumble, God wants our hearts fixed on Him.

Verse 15 “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 and utensils. Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha 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.” Ramah was on the border between Israel and Judah - only 8 miles from Jerusalem.

Here's why King Baasha of Israel built Ramah... Asa's reforms birthed a revival in Judah. It stirred a hunger in the hearts of people, as far away as Israel. Many in the north wanted to return to the true worship of God, and migrate south to Judah. Baasha didn't like it. He built Ramah as a checkpoint to stop the exodus.

The city of Ramah was Baasha's version of *the Berlin wall*.

Here's what happens... King Asa buys the help of the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad. He attacks Baasha's northern territories. Baasha moves north to defend himself - leaving the city of Ramah for Asa to dismantle. Here's the moral... “God always keeps the way open for those who desire to worship Him in spirit and truth.”

Verse 23, “The rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, all that he did, and 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.”

It reminds me of the tombstone in Richmond, Virginia which reads, “She always said her feet were killing her, but nobody believed her.” Maybe that was Asa.

2 Chronicles 16:12 makes an interesting comment on Asa’s illness, “Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was very severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians.” He consulted all the podiatrists.

I wonder though, if this applies to any of us, “he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians”. We go from specialist after specialist – but we never really seek the Lord for His healing touch. Remember, the DRs and MDs call themselves “*practicing physicians*” - only the Lord Jesus is “*the Great Physician*”.

Hey, when you’ve got a foot problem don’t just go to *Dr. Shoals*. Go see *Dr. Jesus*. You’re always *a foot up* on a problem when you consult the Lord.

As the Scriptures say, “*Love the Lord your God with all your soul.*”

Verse 24 “So Asa rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.”

Because of Asa’s foot problem I’m not sure Jehoshaphat was looking forward to *filling in his father’s shoes*. But Jehoshaphat also was one of Judah’s good guys. We’ll read about Jehoshaphat again in the last chapter of 1 Kings.

In the meantime, the next 7 chapters focus on the northern kingdom of Israel.

Verse 25 “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, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.” The assassins had taken aim.

“Then Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Baasha killed him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.” Jeroboam’s dynasty lasted two years once he was off the throne. Nadab was killed in a bloody and treacherous coup.

“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 with which he had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.” This was the prophecy we discussed in 14:10.

God took away the house of Jeroboam as a man throws out his trash.

Verse 31 “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 Baasha king of Israel all their days.

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, 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 had made Israel sin.” This will be a familiar refrain throughout the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. Every king was guilty of adopting the alternative religion of Jeroboam.

Chapter 16 “Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying: "Inasmuch 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 sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins, surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” Baasha mimicked Jeroboam’s *sin* – therefore, he’ll mimic Jeroboam’s *end*.

“The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields.” Baasha’s boys will become Alpo for Israel’s dogs. With the likes of Israel’s kings, their dogs stayed well fed.

Verse 5 “Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

So Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah.

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 Baasha and 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, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed them.” Psalm 103:8 reads, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy....”

God is “merciful and... slow to anger,” but He can be provoked. It takes a lot. Push His patience long enough and hard enough, and God will get angry.

Verse 8 “In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel, and reigned two years in Tirzah.

Now his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of his house in Tirzah;” Elah gets inebriated, and becomes an easy target...

“and Zimri went in and struck him and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.” Another king of Israel assassinated.

Hey, when you get drunk more bad stuff can happen to you than good stuff.

“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 Baasha; (murdered all rivals to the throne) “he did not leave him one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends.

Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha 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 anger 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?

“In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in Tirzah seven days. And the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. Now the people who were encamped 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 all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon, and they besieged Tirzah.

And it happened, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that 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 sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he had committed to make Israel sin.” *Zimri was the king who reined one week.*

After he *snuffed out* a *sloshed up* Elah, and slaughtered the house of Baasha, Zimri realized he was not the people’s choice. They wanted General Omri to rein.

Zimri knew he was fighting a losing battle, so he committed suicide. Zimri torched the royal palace and went down in

flames - a victim of burnout.

Suicide has been called, “the last resort of the man who dares not stand up to life.” Suicide is not the unpardonable sin, but it is a sin – the sin of self-murder. G Campbell Morgan referred to suicide as “the ultimate action of cowardice.”

“Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and the treason he committed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” What an ominous start for Israel. Of her first 5 kings two were assassinated, and one committed suicide.

Verse 21 “Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri. But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri reigned.” King Omri ruled a total of twelve years. He ruled 7 years as *sole sovereign* over the northern kingdom.

Remember in the south, Asa, became king in the 20th year of Jeroboam – and reined 41 years. That means Asa’s reign overlapped the first 7 kings of Israel.

Judah enjoyed a remarkable stability. Israel was in constant turmoil.

Verse 23 “In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned 12 years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah. And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for 2 talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill.” Omri’s most notable

achievement was the building of the city of Samaria. Later, Samaria will take over from Tirzah as the capitol of the northern kingdom.

Several features made Samaria a powerful city. *First*, since it was a new city it was politically neutral. It had no tribal association. *Second*, it was built on a hill 328 feet high. Its elevation made it easier to defend against ancient armies.

History views Omri as one of Israel's most successful kings. For years the Assyrians referred to the northern kingdom of Israel as "the house of Omri".

But God a different opinion, verse 25, "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 in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols." Notice again "the ways of Jeroboam" – it was the evil religion of accommodation.

Verse 27 "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."

Once, a drug dealer died in a shoot-out. His mafia family approached the local pastor and told him they'd give him \$1000 to preach the boy's funeral. The pastor refused. *How could he say anything nice about a drug dealing, mafia member?*

That's when the brother offered him \$10,000. The pastor

buckled. As he took the money the brother warned, “**Make sure you say my brother was a saint.**”

The pastor started his service, “**We are gathered today to remember the vilest, wickedest, meanest man this city has ever seen... but compared to his brother he was a saint.**” As evil as Omri was compared to his successor he was a saint.

We read, “**Then Ahab his son reigned in his place.**” Ahab will rule 22 years, and they’ll prove to be the darkest, most wicked, 22 years in the history of the nation.

“**In the thirty-eighth 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 it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and **served Baal and worshiped him.**” Even to this day we refer to an evil, sinister, treacherous, plotting, and conniving woman, as “*a Jezebel*”. She was a royal witch.

Jeroboam had established a subtle form of idolatry, but Ahab and Jezebel pulled out all the stops. They promoted a no-holds-barred, blatant idolatry.

They introduced the evil system of Baal worship.

The historian Josephus says Jezebel taught the worship of Baal to Ahab.

Jezebel brought with her to Israel the priests and prophets of Baal - then she supported their ministry. Jezebel’s goal was

to make Baal the god of Israel.

According to 1 Kings 18:13, Jezebel even launched a campaign in Israel to exterminate the prophets of Jehovah. She was a vile and violent woman.

Prior to the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Israel flirted with Baal worship, but the *demonic duo* institutionalized and promoted this blasphemous religion.

“Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.” We assume that Jezebel had Ahab build a temple to Baal in his capitol.

Baal worship was hideous. He was a god of the Canaanites - the god of nature. The Canaanites believed that Baal controlled agricultural, and the processes of reproduction. Baal's female counterpart was *“Asherah”* or *“Ashtoreth”*.

She was the goddess of fertility, and was worshipped with lewd and immoral sexual activities. Baal worship came with temple prostitution, and child sacrifice.

Verse 33 gets worse, **“Ahab made a wooden image.”** Or an *“Asherah pole”*. It was phallic symbol that stood for the wicked perversions of the fertility followers.

This why I said at the beginning of tonight's study... Solomon opened *“Pandora's Box”*. *Solomon's concessions* - led to *Jeroboam's compromise* - which led to *Ahab's corruption*. Solomon's slide was never stopped.

And beware, this is how sin works in our lives – *little concessions* lead to *calculated compromises*, which lead eventually to *rampant corruption*.

Verse 33, sums up the evil of Israel's 8th king - "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 Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram 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."

Chapter 16 ends with the fulfillment of a 500 year old prophecy.

In Joshua 6:26, Joshua curses the city of Jericho. Whoever tries to rebuild the city will bury the corpse of his sons in its foundation, and in the footings of the gates. This practice was probably a form of child sacrifice to pagan gods.

This prophecy is fulfilled 500 years later, when Hiel raises Jericho from ruins.

Author Peter Stoner calculated the odds of this prophecy happening by chance to be 1 in 2 million – astronomical. This is more proof of the Bible's inerrancy.

As 1 King 16 comes to a close the sun is hidden behind the clouds. The family of Israel is at war with one another. Wicked men occupy positions of leadership.

Israel is experiencing one of the vilest moments in the history of the nation.

But that's when God shines one of his brightest lights. Chapter 17 opens with the words, "Elijah the Tishbite" ... *hang tight, the out-of-sight Tishbite, is on site - shining the light,*

*filled with God's might, upholding the right, fighting the fight.
And we'll study Elijah... next Sunday night! Aw right!*