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The Worst of Times

Lesson 2 • 1Kings 11:1-16:34

Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. 1Kings 16:30

1. How Bad Were the Times of Elijah?

- King Solomon's **IDOLATRY** led to a **DIVIDED KINGDOM**.
1 Kings 11:1-12:24

Solomon's Heart: Turned Away by His Pagan Wives! (11:1-28)

Solomon's Kingdom: Torn Away by His Promise-Keeping LORD! (11:29-12:24)

- Southern Kingdom of "Judah" under King Rehoboam, Solomon's son.
- Northern Kingdom of "Israel" under King Jeroboam, Solomon's servant.

- King Jeroboam's **HERESY** led to a **DEPRAVED N. KINGDOM**.
1 Kings 12:25-14:20

Jeroboam's Heresy: Created His Own Rival Religion in the Name of Yahweh!

- Rival **OBJECTS** of worship in the LORD's Name. (12:28)
- Rival **PLACES** to worship vs. the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem. (12:29-30)
- Rival **PRIESTHOOD** for worship vs. the LORD's Levitical Priesthood in Jerusalem. (12:31)
- Rival **FEAST** as worship vs. the LORD's Three Festivals in Jerusalem. (12:32-33)

Jeroboam's Legacy: A Line of Depraved Kings Who Competed to Be the Bigger Sinner!

- JEROBOAM, "**Jerk-o-boam**," reigned 22-years [931-910 BC]. (Read 14:12:16-14:20)
"you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back —" 1Kings 14:9
- NADAB, "**Like Father Like Son**," reigned 2-years [910-909 BC]. (Read 15:25-31)
"He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin." 1Kings 15:26
- BAASHA, "**Baasha the Basher**," reigned 24-years [909-886 BC]. (Read 15:32-16:7)
"He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin." 1Kings 15:34



*"Behold you gods, O Israel,
that brought you up
from the land of Egypt!"
King Jeroboam*

- 4) ELAH, “**The Drunken Party Boy,**” reigned 2-years [886-885]. (Read 16:8-14)

His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he was at Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household at Tirzah. for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols. 1Kings 16:9, 13

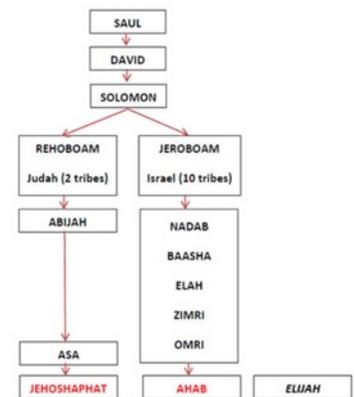
- 5) ZIMRI, “**the One Week Wonder,**” reigned 7-days [885]. (Read 16:15-20)

When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king’s house and burned the king’s house over him with fire, and died, because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin. 1Kings 16:18-19

- 6) OMRI, “**the Leading Sinner,**” reigned 12-years [885-874]. (Read 16:21-28)

“Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel with their idols.” 1Kings 16:25-26

- 7) AHAB, “**the Apostate,**” reigned 22-years [874-853]. (Read 16:29-22:40)



- King Ahab’s **APOSTASY** led to a spiritually **DEVASTATED KINGDOM**. 1Kings 16:29-22:53

“Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

2. How Wicked Was King Ahab?

- So wicked, he enjoyed **WINNING** the “*Biggest Sinner Contest*” over all of Israel’s kings. 1Kings 16:29-31a

The **Depravity of Ahab’s Heart** Was Very Wicked!

- So wicked, he **MARRIED** Jezebel, who was a pagan princess and priestess of the false god, Baal. 1Kings 16:31b

The **Immorality of Ahab’s Wife** Was Very Wicked!

- So wicked, he not only married a Baal worshipper, he totally **BECAME ONE**. 1Kings 16:32-33

The **Apostasy of Ahab’s Life** Was Very Wicked!

- So wicked, he led his entire kingdom into **DEFYING** the LORD. 1Kings 16:34

The **Disloyalty of Ahab’s Influence** Was Very Wicked!

Under the Influence of Ahab and Jezebel, the People of Israel...

- Denied** the character of the living God!
- Defied** the commandments of Israel’s God!
- Despised** the covenant of the LORD, the promise keeping God!

Are We Living in the Worst of Times Like Elijah?

Is sin among God’s people treated as **TRIVIAL**?

Is compromise by God’s people gradually becoming more **ACCEPTABLE**?

Is apostasy – *falling away from the faith* – by God’s people being treated as **INCONSEQUENTIAL**?

Is worshipping the LORD – *the Living God* – according to His written Word increasingly **UNDESIRABLE** even **DETESTABLE**?

Is a general apathy among God’s people toward loving the LORD and living out His Word **DISCERNIBLE**?

Lessons to Learn and Live • Loyalty in Times of Apostasy

(or Why We Don't Unhitch from the Old Testament! Ironically Many of These New Testament Passages Are Quoting from the Old Testament!)

1. Spiritual legacies can have a profound impact for either godliness or ungodliness long after we die.

*I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day... For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. **2Timothy 1:3, 5***

*You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **2Timothy 3:14-15***

2. Spiritual compromise is highly contagious and extremely deadly.

*You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. **Galatians 5:7-9***

*Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. **1Timothy 4:16***

3. Spiritual compromise is often a slippery slope that leads to idolatry, heresy, and finally apostasy.

*For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. **2Timothy 3:2-7***

4. Spiritual compromise in choosing who to marry can have catastrophic long-term consequences.

*Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. **2Corinthians 6:14-17***

5. Apathy and apostasy go hand-in-hand. All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

*For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? **Hebrews 2:1-3***

*For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. **2Timothy 1:6-7***

6. Everything rises and falls on leadership, so following the character qualifications for church leaders is essential.

*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach... **1Timothy 3:1-2***

7. We become who and what we worship. What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration.

*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. **Romans 1:20-25** (Read the whole chapter!)*

*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **Romans 8:29***

8. The LORD determines how He is to be worshipped – no one else – and He has revealed what He desires and requires in His Word for His local churches.

*I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory. **1Timothy 3:14-16***

9. No matter how dark the days or how bad the times, the promise-keeping, living God of Israel is on His throne and is graciously working out His purposes for His people according to His sovereign Word. He is even using the most wicked people to fulfill His holy promises of salvation and judgment.

*You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory. **Romans 9:19-23***

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. **Jude 24-25***

10. One person with God is a majority. (More on this NEXT WEEK!)

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at [Stephen]. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. **Acts 7:54-60***

*At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. **2Timothy 4:16-18***

Because worship is at the heart of the conflict between Elijah and his enemies, Ahab and Jezebel, here are a few more insights on *How We Become What We Worship*:

“What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration.”

– G. K. Beale, from his book, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*

“When human beings give their heartfelt allegiance to and worship that which is not God, they progressively cease to reflect the image of God. One of the primary laws of human life is that you become like what you worship; what’s more, you reflect what you worship not only to the object itself but also outward to the world around.

Those who worship money increasingly define themselves in terms of it and increasingly treat other people as creditors, debtors, partners, or customers rather than as human beings. Those who worship sex define themselves in terms of it (their preferences, their practices, their past histories) and increasingly treat other people as actual or potential sex objects. Those who worship power define themselves in terms of it and treat other people as either collaborators, competitors, or pawns. These and many other forms of idolatry combine in a thousand ways, all of them damaging to the image-bearing quality of the people concerned and of those whose lives they touch.” – N. T. Wright