

**1 Kings 16**  
**February 2, 2025**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Over the years, I have heard those who aren't followers of Jesus, and even those who are Christian struggle with "Why is a God, who is supposed to be loving God, get so angry that He kills people?" Those who don't follow Jesus know enough about the OT to be dangerous, and Christians who have read the OT have wondered the same. How would you help individuals who struggle with this notion that God is a "wrathful" God? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** One of the best teachings I have received on dealing with this tension question is that throughout the OT, God always gave His people warnings before His judgment came. And even after judgment happened, He always delivered them and gave them a new beginning. So the pattern was: people sinned, God warned them through prophets and told them to repent and turn away from them. When they didn't, he gave a warning. And if they still didn't repent, then judgment came. But then later he would restore them.

As we read today's chapter, we're going to see an example of God following through on consequences for worshipping idols. It's severe as He destroys certain households. Let's read the text.

**BOOK:**

16 Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha: <sup>2</sup>"I lifted you up from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel, but you walked in the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin and to provoke me to anger by their sins. <sup>3</sup>So I am about to consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat. <sup>4</sup>Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country."

<sup>5</sup>As for the other events of Baasha's reign, what he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? <sup>6</sup>Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. And Elah his son succeeded him as king.

<sup>7</sup>Moreover, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani to Baasha and his house, because of all the evil he (Baasha) had done in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger by the things he did, and becoming like the house of Jeroboam—and also because he destroyed it.

**Elah King of Israel**

<sup>8</sup>In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah two years.

<sup>9</sup> Zimri, one of his officials, who had command of half his chariots, plotted against him (Elah). Elah was in Tirzah at the time, getting drunk in the home of Arza, the man in charge of the palace at Tirzah. <sup>10</sup> Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah. Then he succeeded him as king.

<sup>11</sup> As soon as he began to reign and was seated on the throne, he (Zimri) killed off Baasha's whole family. He did not spare a single male, whether relative or friend. <sup>12</sup> So Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu— <sup>13</sup> because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols.

<sup>14</sup> As for the other events of Elah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

#### **Zimri King of Israel**

<sup>15</sup> In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days. The army was encamped near Gibbethon, a Philistine town. <sup>16</sup> When the Israelites in the camp heard that Zimri had plotted against the king and murdered him (Elah), they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day there in the camp. <sup>17</sup> Then Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. <sup>18</sup> When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he (Zimri) died, <sup>19</sup> because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord and walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in the sin he had committed and had caused Israel to commit.

<sup>20</sup> As for the other events of Zimri's reign, and the rebellion he carried out, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

#### **Omri King of Israel**

<sup>21</sup> Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri. <sup>22</sup> But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died, and Omri became king.

<sup>23</sup> In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. <sup>24</sup> He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents (150 pounds) of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria (capital of the northern kingdom), after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill.

<sup>25</sup> But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him. <sup>26</sup> He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, so that they provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their worthless idols.

<sup>27</sup> As for the other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? <sup>28</sup> Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.

### **Ahab Becomes King of Israel**

<sup>29</sup> In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. <sup>31</sup> He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians (a Phoenician king – new alliance), and began to serve Baal and worship him. <sup>32</sup> He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.

<sup>34</sup> In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

#### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

#### **LOOK:**

There are consequences of disobedience to God. There are dangers in following wicked leaders. So let's remember that it's important to choose good company, remember the reality of God's judgment on sin, and the lasting impact of our actions and choices – particularly in leadership roles.

#### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 15:25-16:34). Victor Books.***

### **III. The Decay of Israel (15:25–16:34)**

Six kings are listed here, starting with Nadab and ending with Ahab, and all of them were evil. Nadab maintained his father's wicked idolatry; he was slain by Baasha during one of the battles with the Philistines. Baasha reigned for twenty-four years and fulfilled the prophecy of 14:14–15 that all of Jeroboam's seed would be destroyed. Jehu the prophet then came with a message for Baasha, however, predicting the destruction of Baasha's household. His son, Elah, reigned for less than two years and was killed by Zimri, one of his captains, while the king was drunk. Zimri led the nation for only one week (16:15), but during that time he wiped out the family of Baasha and fulfilled the prophecy of Jehu (16:1–4). The army revolted and appointed Omri the new king. He in turn marched against Zimri, who set fire to the palace and committed suicide by perishing in the blaze. Omri ruled for twelve years (after putting down a brief revolt of the people) and led the people into further sin. His son Ahab was married to Jezebel, and this brought Baal worship officially into the kingdom. His only claim to fame was the establishing of Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom. Upon his death, his son Ahab came to the throne, and under his leadership the tribes declined further into idolatry and sin.

You will note that it was when the nation was moving into idolatry that God called His prophets forth to preach to the people. We have met an anonymous prophet in chapter 13, and we will yet meet Elijah and Elisha. Of course, Jehu and Ahijah should also be mentioned. When God's people sin, it is only the Word of God proclaimed by the servants of God that can call them back and save them.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34, NKJV). When godly kings were ruling, God blessed His people; when ungodly men reigned, God sent judgment and defeat. How tragic it is to see this great nation, called by the Lord, now declining in spiritual things and turning away from the truth. Yes, they often had material prosperity, but this was no sign that God was pleased with their deeds. In fact, the lust for material things often led the people farther from God. The best way to build a godly nation is to have godly citizens in godly churches (1 Tim. 2:1–6).

***Constable, C.L. (1985). 1 Kings. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 520-522) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books***

### **2. Jehu's prophecy (16:1–4)**

**16:1–4.** Jehu the prophet must be distinguished from Jehu the king of Israel (841–814 b.c.). This prophet was the son of Hanani. This Hanani may or may not have been the prophet who warned King Asa of Judah (2 Chron. 16:7–9). God said He had lifted Baasha up from the dust and made him leader of the Israelites. This implies that Baasha had a lowly origin. Almost the same words used to describe Baasha's future judgment (1 Kings 16:4) had been given to Jeroboam by the Prophet Ahijah (cf. 14:7, 10–11) and were given later by Elijah to Ahab (21:24). The fact that Baasha did not turn to the Lord in spite of his being God's instrument of judgment on the house

of Jeroboam suggests his complete blindness to the importance of spiritual matters in his own life and in that of his nation. Baasha committed the same sins himself. This indicates that the level of his apostasy was deep.

### **3. Baasha's death (16:5–7)**

**16:5–7.** The writer followed his regular recording of the facts surrounding the king's death (vv. 5–6) with an additional re-emphasis on the reasons for Baasha's judgment by God (v. 7). Baasha's destruction of Jeroboam's house (family or dynasty) was one reason. Even though God determined that Jeroboam's dynasty would be destroyed and announced this beforehand through Ahijah, God held Baasha responsible for killing Jeroboam's descendants. In doing so Baasha had not acted under God's direction, but only to gain his own ends.

### **H. Elah's evil reign in Israel (16:8–14)**

**16:8–10.** Elah assumed the throne of Israel and ... reigned in Tirzah, the capital, for two years (886–885 b.c.). He continued the wicked policies of his predecessors (v. 13). No specific accomplishments are recorded for him. He is infamous as the king who was murdered while getting drunk (v. 10). As commander of half of Elah's chariots ... Zimri was a powerful military officer.

**16:11–14.** Zimri completely destroyed Israel's second ruling family (Baasha's family) plus friends of the family in order to avoid retaliation against his coup d'état. Thus, Jehu's prophecy (cf. v. 3) was fulfilled. Again, the writer identified the spiritual root of the judgment (v. 13).

### **I. Zimri's evil reign in Israel (16:15–20)**

**16:15–20.** Zimri's seven-day reign (885 b.c.) proved to be the shortest of any Israelite king. Gibbethon in Philistia was again under siege by Israel's army (cf. 15:27). It probably took a runner two days to reach the army at Gibbethon after the assassination of Elah. The troops immediately heralded Omri, the commander of the army (16:16), as the new king even though Zimri had declared himself king in Tirzah. Zimri was not an acceptable candidate for the throne in the minds of Omri and his men as they marched back to the capital. They appeared at the city walls (probably after marching about four or five days) and took control of the city. Zimri apparently knew he could not retain his throne or save his life, so he did as much damage to the palace as he could while taking his life. His death resulted ultimately from his sins (v. 19).

### **J. Omri's evil reign in Israel (16:21–28)**

**16:21–24.** The death of Zimri (vv. 17–18) did not automatically place the kingdom in Omri's hands. Half the population including the army sided with him, but the other half preferred Tibni. Tibni's strength can be seen in that he was able to oppose Omri successfully for six years (885–880 b.c.). During this time, civil war ravaged Israel and threatened to split the Northern Kingdom into two parts. But eventually Omri overpowered Tibni and became the sole ruler (880–874 b.c.). Omri's army support apparently proved decisive and Tibni died (v. 22), probably by being executed.

For the first six years of his reign (885–880 b.c.) Omri ruled in the old capital of Tirzah (cf. 14:17; 15:21, 33; 16:6, 8–9, 15, 17). But then he moved into his brand new capital, Samaria. He built this city on a hill, well situated for defense, seven miles west of Tirzah. Omri paid Shemer ... two talents (about 150 pounds) of silver for the hill. (Samaria was named after Shemer; cf. v. 24). Archeologists have unearthed evidence that Samaria was built by skillful craftsmen. The site dominated the north-south trade routes. Samaria proved to be almost impregnable as a stronghold against alien attacks because of its elevated position.

Omri was probably the strongest leader of the Northern Kingdom up to that time. Assyrian records dating from over a century later refer to Israel as “the land of Omri.” During Omri’s reign Ben-Hadad I, king of the Arameans in Damascus (see the chart “Kings of Aram in 1 and 2 Kings,” near 1 Kings 11:23–25), continued to add to his holdings to the north of Israel. Omri’s son, Ahab, had difficulty containing these Aramean aggressors. Also, the Assyrian Empire was growing stronger and farther to the northeast under *Ashurnasirpal II* (883–859; see the chart “Kings of Assyria in the Middle and the New Assyrian Kingdoms,” near Jonah 1:2) and proceeded to expand its territory as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. Faced by these threats on his north, Omri was able to protect Israel well enough to attack and defeat Moab to the southeast at the same time. This victory is referred to on the famous Moabite Stone. Another of Omri’s significant achievements was his alliance with the Phoenicians which was sealed with the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, a daughter of the Phoenician king, Ethbaal (cf. 1 Kings 16:31).

**16:25–28.** Though Omri is passed over quickly in 1 Kings, he was a powerful and politically effective king. But the major concern of the writer of 1 Kings was Omri’s spiritual condition. In this he was the worst Israelite king so far (vv. 25–26). Omri’s 12-year reign ended with his death and burial in his new capital city. His rule passed to his son, Ahab. Omri was the founder of the fourth dynasty of Israelite kings.

### **K. Ahab’s evil reign in Israel (16:29–22:40)**

#### **1. Ahab’s wickedness (16:29–34)**

**16:29–31.** Ahab ruled Israel from Samaria for 22 years (874–853 b.c.). He was the most wicked king Israel had experienced, even worse than his father Omri who was worse than all before him (v. 25). Ahab’s wickedness consisted of perpetuating all the sins of Jeroboam; he even considered them trivial. In addition, Ahab married a pagan princess, Jezebel, who zealously tried to promote her depraved cult as the exclusive religion of Israel. Jezebel’s father, Ethbaal, was king of the Sidonians (Phoenicians), with his capital in Tyre. Baal (meaning “lord”) is a name used generally in the Old Testament for the male deity the native Canaanite tribes worshiped under various other titles. The Tyrians called him Baal Melqart, but their religion was only a cultic variation of the standard Baal worship common throughout Palestine. Evidently Ahab was not forced to marry Jezebel; his choice to marry her is something for which the writer held him responsible.

**16:32–33.** Ahab built a temple for Baal in the capital of Israel (Samaria) and constructed an altar for Baal in it. Asherah poles (cf. 14:15, 23; 15:13) were idols carved to stimulate worship of Baal's female counterpart. The writer repeated the seriousness of Ahab's sins for emphasis (16:33; cf. v. 30).

**16:34.** The re-fortification of Jericho was specifically forbidden by Joshua after God supernaturally destroyed it (Josh. 6:26). Though the city had been occupied since Joshua's day, Hiel's reconstruction seems to have been the first serious attempt to restore it to its former condition. Joshua's prophecy was fulfilled literally when two of Hiel's sons perished. Perhaps this reference, which seems unrelated to Ahab's accomplishments, was included to show that as God's word was fulfilled in this instance so it would be in Ahab's case. Ahab was setting up a system of worship that God said He would judge, as Hiel had tried to set up a city that God had said He would judge.

**Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 141-142). Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

**Zimri's Seven Days (16:15–20).** Zimri's reign, the Third "Dynasty," had the distinction of being the shortest in the history of Israel. He ruled for seven days before he committed suicide in the flames of his palace. His demise was plotted by General Omri, who led an expedition against Zimri for his murder of King Elah.

**The House of Omri (16:21–28).** Omri defeated Tibni, a rival to the throne, and founded the Fourth Dynasty in Israel. His reign was only twelve years (885–874 b.c.). His fame was so great that a hundred years after his death the nation Israel was still called the "house of Omri." Omri had close ties with the Phoenicians, even marrying his son Ahab to the Tyrian princess Jezebel. Omri moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. There the kings of Israel ruled until its destruction by the Assyrians in 722 b.c.

**Ahab and Jezebel (16:29–34).** Ahab and Jezebel reigned for twenty-two years (874–853 b.c.). Together they attempted to make Israel a pagan nation devoted to Baal and Asherah, the deities of the Sidonians. Ahab erected an idol of Baal in Samaria and built an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. The sacred historian was unimpressed with Ahab's many political accomplishments. Twice he evaluated Ahab's rule as more evil than all his predecessors. During the reign of Ahab, a man named Hiel, who was from the sinful city of Bethel, rebuilt the city of Jericho. His sons died under the curse Joshua pronounced upon anyone who restored the city (Josh. 6:26). The author included this account to show that the Lord's judgment on sin is certain. Ahab too would suffer for his sins.

**Tatum, S. L. (1972). *1 Kings. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 201-202). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

*The passage*—Family quarrels are always especially bitter. Abijam, son of Rehoboam of Judah, and Jeroboam fought as long as Jeroboam lived. His death was recorded in the preceding chapter and this chapter summarizes and relates the reign of Abijam to the last part of the reign of Jeroboam. Only for the sake of David did God tolerate Abijam in spite of his sins.

Asa became king of Judah upon the death of Abijam, and he was a refreshing change for the better. He made partial religious reforms. Asa made an alliance with Ben Hadad I of Syria and gave him many of the treasures of the Temple.

In Israel, Nadab ruled briefly and was succeeded by Baasha, who overthrew him, destroying the descendants of Jeroboam. Baasha of Israel and Asa of Judah continued the civil war.

Baasha's son, Elah, ruled briefly. Zimri overthrew him and destroyed all of his kin. He did not reign long, however, because Omri, his commander of the army, seized power. Zimri was killed in a fire that destroyed his palace. Omri began a new dynasty. He is most famous for his wicked son Ahab.

Ahab did more wickedness than all of the kings before him. Jezebel, his wife, was a notorious Baal worshiper. Their wickedness was an abomination to God. His anger was great against their sins.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

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