

## **Lecture #17 – Exposition of I Kings 13-16**

### **Chapter 13 – Reign of Jeroboam**

#### **vs. 1-10 – The Broken Altar – 974 B.C.**

An unnamed prophet appears at Bethel as Jeroboam is offering incense on his new altar. A remarkable prophecy is made, that a descendant of David named Josiah would desecrate that altar. This is fulfilled 351 years later<sup>1</sup> with King Josiah in II Kings 23:16. As a sign of the sureness of the prophecy, the altar broke open and spilled its ashes. As Jeroboam pointed to the prophet for someone to arrest him, his outstretched hand became lifeless.

After the unnamed prophet prays, the use of Jeroboam's hand returns. The prophet departs without eating or drinking and heads back a different way than he came.

#### **vs. 11-32 – The Disobedient Prophet**

An old prophet hears the news and seeks the unnamed prophet. He presses for that prophet to return to his home in Bethel and dine with him. The unnamed prophet refuses, saying that God had forbid him from doing so. But the old prophet lies and claims that an angel had instructed him to so invite the unnamed prophet.

The unnamed prophet is rebuked by Divine message through the old prophet and his death is foretold. A lion attacked him as he left the city but did not devour him or his donkey (a most unusual thing). The old prophet retrieves the body and buries it in his own tomb.

On the judgment upon the unnamed prophet, Davis observes:

“The prophet believed the trumped-up message, accepted the invitation, and died under God's judgment as a result. Why was the penalty so severe? Was it really his fault? Our approach to this problem is exceedingly important. God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation, indicates clearly that it is possible to recognize God's voice through the convicting and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. No other supporting evidence is really needed, or that would outweigh God's own voice in importance to the human heart. The unnamed prophet knew God's command. He also knew that God does not contradict His own Word... So when the old prophet claimed the unnamed prophet could eat and drink in Israel, his heart should have detected the hiss of the Serpent and his lips should have cried out, NO!!”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> So reckons Reese's Chronological Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Israel: From Conquest to Exile by John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb. p. 361-362

### vs. 33-34 – The Character of Jeroboam

Jeroboam did not heed the prophetic warning and that sin – the poisonous seed he planted – would be the downfall of his kingdom.

## **Chapter 14 – Deaths of Rehoboam and Jeroboam**

### vs. 1-18 – The Death of Abijah

Abijah (“my father is Jehovah”)<sup>3</sup>, son of Jeroboam, was deathly sick. His mother was sent to seek the prophet Ahijah to intercede for the child’s life. Ahijah was elderly and had largely lost his sight. But God revealed to him who the visitor was and what her mission would be. God’s message for Jeroboam was that because of his unfaithfulness his dynasty would end.

Wood writes on this event:

“Later, in remarks spoken to Jeroboam's wife, Ahijah the prophet spoke against this false worship (1 Kings 14:1-18). The queen had disguised herself and come to Ahijah to inquire if her son would recover from a serious illness. Ahijah, informed by God beforehand that she would do so, took the occasion not only to inform her that the boy would die but also to denounce the royal family for its sin and predict the destruction of the entire household. Jeroboam, in sending his wife to inquire of the prophet, had concluded that because Ahijah had favored him once in predicting his rule, he would do so again.

“He discovered, however, that God's prophets are not in the business of courting royal favor; instead, they are busy proclaiming God's truth whatever the effect might be. The child did die, as Ahijah foretold, and the entire family was destroyed later by a successor, Baasha.”<sup>4</sup>

On the “good thing” noted in the heart of Abijah, Poole says that it was “some pious inclinations and intentions of taking away the calves, or of permitting or obliging his people to go up to Jerusalem to worship, if God gave him life and authority to do it, and of trusting God with his kingdom in that case.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>4</sup> A Survey of Israel’s History by Leon Wood. p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Poole’s Commentary. E-Sword module.

### vs. 19-20 – Overview of Jeroboam’s Reign over Israel

Jeroboam reigned for 22 years and was succeeded by his son Nadab (“liberal, generous”)<sup>6</sup>.

Knapp gives him this epithet – “God has placed the stamp of eternal infamy on his name”<sup>7</sup>

### vs. 21-31 – The Reign of Rehoboam over Judah

↻ II Chronicles 12:1-16

Rehoboam reigned for 17 years over Judah. His son Abijam/Abijah (“my father is Jehovah”)<sup>8</sup> succeeded him.

The failures of Rehoboam were (1) that high places and images multiplied in his reign, (2) there were sodomites<sup>9</sup> in the land, and (3) that Shishak spoiled the city of its riches.

Take note in vs. 26-27 on how Shishak took golden shield that Solomon had made in I Kings 10:16-17. Rehoboam replaces them with brazen shields which would look similar, but of course of much lesser value. One can’t help but wonder if this was done to try to make the people believe that they still possessed the golden shields.

Knapp writes:

“Rehoboam died at the age of fifty-eight. The Spirit's last comment on his character is significant: ‘And he did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.’ There we are told in a single sentence the whole secret of his failure, both as king of Judah, and servant of Jehovah, who gave him this exalted position, he applied not his heart to seek Jehovah. May God in His grace, help us to apply our hearts to seek first and always His kingdom and righteousness. Only so shall we be kept from evil, and preserved from making the record of our lives read anything like Rehoboam's—one sad succession of decline and failure.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Easton’s Bible Dictionary.

<sup>7</sup> The Kings of Israel by C. Knapp. p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary, a form of Abijah.

<sup>9</sup> John Gill comments on *sodomites*: “Such as were addicted to unnatural lusts between men and men, which the men of Sodom were guilty of, from whence they had their name: Jarchi interprets the word adultery and some versions render it whoremongers; and filthy actions of this nature, both by men and women, usually attended idolatrous practices among the heathens; in their temples and groves such wickednesses were privately perpetrated.”

<sup>10</sup> The Kings of Judah by C. Knapp. p. 35-36.

## **Chapter 15 – Abijam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Nadab, Baasha**

### **vs. 1-8 – The Reign of Abijam over Judah**

☪ II Chronicles 13:1-2, 7-8

Abijam (also called Abijah) reigned for only three years. II Chronicles 13 has a longer account of his reign and battle with Jeroboam. His mother Maachah (“oppression”)<sup>11</sup> is said by Josephus to be the granddaughter of Absalom.<sup>12</sup> He was succeeded by his son Asa (“physician or cure”).<sup>13</sup>

### **vs. 9-24 – The Reign of Asa over Judah**

☪ II Chronicles 14:1-5; 16:1-6, 11-14

Asa reigned for 41 years over Judah. Here is mentioned his grandmother Maachah, the term “mother” being broad such as “father” is used sometimes by the Jews. Barnes and Reese suggest that she filled the role of “queen mother” in the court and was powerful politically.

Asa begins his reign well. He (1) drove the sodomites from the land, (2) removed idols from the land, and (3) deposed his grandmother for her idolatry. His great beginning is only marred in that he did not remove the high places.<sup>14</sup>

He warred against Baasha, king of Israel. Asa took the treasures from the Temple and the palace and hired Benhadad and the Syrians of Damascus to come to his aid. Together they pushed back Baasha.

After the last few years of his life were marked by disease and sickness, he died and succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat (“whom Jehovah judges”).

### **vs. 25-32 – The Reign of Nadab over Israel**

☪ II Chronicles 16:11-14

Nadab reigned over Israel for two years and continued in the sinful ways of his father Jeroboam. In the third year of his reign, he was assassinated by Baasha (“wicked”)<sup>15</sup> while besieging the town of Gibbethon. This was fulfillment of the words of the prophet Ahijah in I Kings 14:11.

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<sup>11</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>12</sup> See John Gill on I Kings 15L2.

<sup>13</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>14</sup> These appear to be dedicated to God, but of worship through self-will. These were alternative to the central place of worship in Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary

### vs. 33-34 – The Reign of Baasha over Israel

Baasha, the usurper from the tribe of Issachar, reigned over Israel for 24 years. His reign was also evil after the manner of Jeroboam.

## **Chapter 16 – Kings of Israel from Baasha to Ahab**

### vs. 1-7 – The Prophecy of Jehu

Baasha is confronted by the prophet Jehu (“Jehovah is he”)<sup>16</sup>. The message from the Lord is that Baasha will suffer the same fate as Jeroboam, to have his family cut off from the throne and to die ignominiously.

Baasha died and was succeeded by his son Elah (“an oak, strength”).<sup>17</sup>

### vs. 8-14 – The Reign of Elah over Israel

Elah reigned over Israel for only two years. He followed in the sinful ways of his predecessors. He was assassinated by one of his generals, Zimri (“praise-worthy”)<sup>18</sup>, who destroys the rest of the house of Baasha as well.

Knapp observes:

“In less than fifty years the first two dynasties of Israel's kings had come to an end and every member of their families been exterminated. God meant to make their doom an example to those who should thereafter live ungodly. They stand as beacons, in these records, to warn all rulers and subjects off the rocks on which they struck to their everlasting ruin. ‘Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein’ (Hos. 14:9). The usual formula ends the record of Elah's worthless life (1 Kings 16:14).”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Easton's Bible Dictionary

<sup>17</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary

<sup>18</sup> Easton's Bible Dictionary

<sup>19</sup> The Kings of Israel by C. Knapp. p. 52-53.

### vs. 15-20 – The Reign of Zimri over Israel

The assassin Zimri reigns only seven days over Israel. The army proclaims Omri (“pupil of Jehovah”)<sup>20</sup> to be the true king and besieges Zimri at Tīrzah. There Zimri commits suicide by burning down the palace around him.<sup>21</sup>

Knapp writes:

“Zimri's perfidy became a byword in Israel. The infamous Jezebel could refer to him and say, ‘Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?’ ‘Treason is punished by treason,’ one has said, ‘and the slayer is slain.’ In Zimri was fulfilled the true proverb, ‘A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him’ (Prov. 28:17). Let Zimri's end warn intentional regicides and traitors.”<sup>22</sup>

### vs. 21-28 – The Reign of Omri over Israel

In something of a predecessor to the Roman “year of four emperors”<sup>23</sup>, a strong military general steps in to seize control of a chaotic succession of rulers in a period of civil war. He is not the only claimant to the throne, as Tibni (“intelligent”)<sup>24</sup> holds the allegiance of half the kingdom. This period of two rulers continued for four years until Omri took control of the entire kingdom.

Omri reigned for 12 years total, four in contest with Tibni and eight as sole ruler. He purchased the site and founded the city of Samaria (“watch mountain”)<sup>25</sup>, which will be the capital for the rest of the Northern Kingdom's existence. His rule had such an impact that the Assyrians more than a century later still referred to the Northern Kingdom of Israel as the “house of Omri”<sup>26</sup>

Knapp writes:

“He seems to have formulated laws, making Jeroboam's calf-worship, or other forms of idolatry, obligatory throughout his realm, which remained in force till the end of the kingdom, more than two hundred years later. ‘For the statutes [a firmly-established system.—Fausset] of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab’ [Baal-worship] (Micah 6:16). Such yokes men willingly bear, and even cling to, so prone is the human heart to idolatry.”<sup>27</sup>

The character of his rule was very bad, worse than his predecessors. He was succeeded by his son Ahab (“father's brother”)<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary

<sup>21</sup> Some, like Matthew Poole, point out that the language is a bit vague it could have been Omri that burned the building in order to kill Zimri.

<sup>22</sup> The Kings of Israel by C. Knapp. p. 56.

<sup>23</sup> 69 A.D. – the year after Nero's death saw Galba, Otho, Vitellius and finally Vespasian claim the empire.

<sup>24</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary.

<sup>25</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary

<sup>26</sup> Israel: From Conquest to Exile by John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb. p. 376.

<sup>27</sup> The Kings of Israel by C. Knapp. p. 58-59. The bracketed words are in the original source.

<sup>28</sup> Easton's Bible Dictionary.

vs. 29-33 – Ahab becomes King over Israel

Ahab would reign over Israel for 22 years and was still more wicked than his father or their predecessors.

An outline of the history of the Jewish religion in the Old Testament:

The *core* of the religion begins with Abraham.

The *complete* religion is given at Sinai.

A *confused* religion is indicative of the era of the Judges.

A *clear* religion is expressed during the reigns of David and Solomon.

A *counterfeit* religion is introduced by Jeroboam.

A *corrupted* religion is established here with the promotion of Baal worship.

A *cleansed* religion is instituted with the return from the Babylonian Captivity.

Wood writes about the promotion of Baal worship:

“Probably the two most familiar names in the history of Northern Israel are King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. But they are known because the biblical record says they did evil in the sight of God more than all before them (1 Kings 16:30). The main reason for this indictment is that they introduced Jezebel's native religion, the cult of Baal-Melqart, to Israel. Worship of Baal, the Canaanite deity, had been observed among Israelite tribes in pre-monarchical days, and Samuel had found it necessary to fight vigorously against it. It is likely that, under vigorous and orthodox kings like David, such worship was at least suppressed. While it probably continued to be practiced as an underground religion when suppressed, under Ahab and Jezebel it acquired the status of a sanctioned religion.

“Jezebel, persistent and dominant as she was, was not content with having her religion merely coexist with that of Yahweh worship. She wanted it to supplant what had been before and lent every effort that it would. She came near to accomplishing her purpose, too, as is indicated especially by her vicious slaughter of the native prophets of Yahweh (1 Kings 18:4), something she, being the foreigner, would not have dared undertake unless she had already been well in command of religious matters. The earlier sin of Jeroboam, establishing the shrines at Dan and Bethel, with their golden calves, had been serious enough; but this introduction of the Baal cult was much worse. It involved an outright substitution of deity – even polytheism for monotheism – and degrading, licentious observances, including religious prostitution.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A Survey of Israel's History by Leon Wood. p. 263-264.

### vs. 34 – The Fortification of Jericho

An anecdote of this period that illustrates the disregard for God’s word is the fortification of Jericho. Joshua had pronounced a curse on the man that fortified<sup>30</sup> the city again. Gill explains that Joshua 6:26 means that:

“while he is laying, or as soon as he has laid the foundation of the city, his eldest son should die; and as he went on with the building, other sons of his, if he had more than two, should be taken away by death likewise; and by the time he has finished it, signified by setting up the gates of it, both for ornament and security, his youngest and last son should die also; so that his whole posterity should be taken away, as a curse of God upon him for rebuilding the city”<sup>31</sup>

Hiel (“God liveth”)<sup>32</sup>, a man of Bethel, began the work in laying the foundations of the walls and his firstborn son Abriam (“Father of height; i.e., ‘proud.’”)<sup>33</sup> died. When he finished the work by hanging the gates, his youngest son Segub (“elevated”)<sup>34</sup> died. Reese calculates that the fulfillment of the curse was 533 years after Joshua spoke it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Not simply rebuilt it. It was inhabited again not long after Joshua destroyed it.

<sup>31</sup> John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible. E-Sword module. The death of the sons is sort of implied.

<sup>32</sup> Smith’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>33</sup> Easton’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>34</sup> Easton’s Bible Dictionary

<sup>35</sup> The Reese Chronological Study Bible, p. 615