

Baasha and Elah, Kings of Israel

1 Kings 16:1-14

1 Kings 16:1-7 - *“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. 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.’”*

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.

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 had done in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger by the things he did, becoming like the house of Jeroboam—and also because he destroyed it.”

Background Notes for Section One:

The first section of 1 Kings 16 contains more of the record of King Baasha, the third king of the northern kingdom of Israel, who came to the throne around 900BC. There were nineteen kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, and all of them were bad. King Baasha was the third of these evil kings; Jeroboam and Nadab preceded him.

Through the prophet Hanani, God said to Baasha, *“I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel”* (v2). It appears that Baasha was a lowly soldier who rose through the ranks to become a prominent military commander in King Nadab’s army. And **God** brought him to this position: *“I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel.”*

In chapter 15 we learned that Baasha, after rising to military power, assassinated King Nadab. God actually allowed this, as judgment for the wickedness of King Nadab and his father, Jeroboam I. But even though God raised Baasha up to bring this judgment on the dynasty of Jeroboam, Baasha did not turn the kingdom back to the Lord. So in chapter 16, God pronounced judgment on Baasha’s dynasty.

Doctrinal Point for Section One

There is no impunity for God's instruments of judgment.

Impunity means exemption, or immunity, from punishment when a law is broken. Sometimes, because of impunity or diplomatic, government officials or diplomats get "off the hook" for minor crimes like a traffic violation.

Well, there's no impunity or immunity for God's instruments of judgment. King Baasha was an instrument of God's judgment when God used him to remove the evil dynasty of Jeroboam I. But notice that 1 Kings 16:7 says, "*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.*"

Notice that last phrase: "*because he killed them.*" Even though God raised Baasha up from the dust and used him as an instrument of judgment on the dynasty of Jeroboam I, yet Baasha was responsible for murdering Nadab. Why? You see, Baasha didn't do this for God's glory. Baasha did it because he wanted to take the throne!

King Baasha was a cruel and calculating conspirator. God held him responsible for his treachery and evil actions, even though God used him as an instrument of judgment. There is no impunity for God's instruments of judgment.

Sometimes it's hard to figure out and understand how God can use any instrument he wants as an instrument of judgment - but He still holds that instrument responsible for his actions. God may use America as His instrument of judgment on other nations, but He will still hold this country responsible for any wrong motive, or cruel strategy, or unjust treatment of other peoples. There is no impunity for God's instruments of judgment.

Practical Application for Section One

Don't commit the same sins as your predecessors!

Notice that judgment came upon Baasha because "*he was like the house of Jeroboam*" (v7). King Baasha committed the same sins as the dynasty of Jeroboam. He didn't learn any lessons from history.

What about us? How often do we see Christians falling into the same sins as their predecessors: drinking, immorality, gossip, slander, and divisions? Even church leaders! You may say, "Well, that doesn't apply to me!" So let's bring it a little closer to home. Did any of you men have fathers who did not treat your mothers with respect, and when you were a boy you said, "My marriage is going to be different. I'm going to treat my wife with respect." Well, are you keeping that commitment? Or are you continuing to commit the sins of your predecessor? Don't commit the same sins as your predecessors.

Or did any of you ladies have mothers who yelled at you or your brothers and sisters for things you didn't do, and you said to yourself, "When I have my own children, I'm never going to be unjust, and scream at them." How are you doing? Are you committing the same sins as your predecessor? Don't commit the same sins as your predecessors!

1 Kings 16:8-14: *"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. 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.*

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; 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?"

Background Notes for Section Two

These verses contain the record of Elah, the fourth king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Elah also ignored God's commandments.

Elah was the son of King Baasha, and he too was a wicked king. Like father, like son. He reigned for two years from the capital city of Tirzah. Then, while he was drunk, his servant Zimri assassinated him. Once again God used this treachery as judgment upon the wicked dynasty of Baasha and Elah (v12-13).

Doctrinal Point for Section Two

Ignoring God's prophets and proverbs is stupid.

Elah was not only wicked - he was stupid! How? Elah certainly must have known of the prophecy of judgment upon the dynasty of Jeroboam I, that was spoken by Ahijah the prophet in 1 Kings 14. Elah knew that that prophecy of judgment had already come true, but he didn't learn the lesson. He ignored God's prophets, proverbs and prophecies.

Furthermore, he knew of the prophecy of judgment upon his father, Baasha, and he had seen that prophecy come true. But Elah ignored it! Elah ignored God's prophets and he foolishly continued to walk in the evil ways of his forefathers.

Proverbs 31:4-5 says, *“It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.”* This proverb was certainly available to Elah, but he ignored it. How stupid of him to hold a drinking party! Elah ignored God’s prophets and proverbs.

How about us? Do we ignore God’s prophets and proverbs by ignoring Scripture? We could have many applications here, but what about the clear teaching, including in Proverbs, that we are not to set our hearts and sights on material things? I always like to think that I’m not a materialist. I don’t care what size house I have. I don’t care about the furniture. But when it comes to **skis** - I want the latest and the best!

We’re all materialists to one degree or another, and so to one degree or another, we all ignore God’s prophets and proverbs. And ignoring God’s prophets and proverbs is stupid!

Practical Application for Section Two

Let’s not provoke the Lord’s anger with our idols.

“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” (v13). Let’s not provoke the Lord to anger with our idols! An idol is not just a molded or carved image. It’s anything that takes the place of God in our hearts and lives.

1 John 5:21, which was written to Christians, says, *“Little children, guard (or keep) yourselves from idols.”* There are many possibilities for “idols” in our lives today. What about our financial security? It can become an idol. Has your financial security for the future become a god for you? Of course we say, “We’re trusting the Lord; we know He’ll take care of us!” So then why do some of us worry about the future? Not trusting the Lord by worrying about the future shows that our financial security may be taking the place of God in our lives. It may be an “idol.”

Now I’m not saying that it’s wrong to have some savings, or that we shouldn’t plan properly for the future. But do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord told us **not to worry** about our basic needs! He’ll take care of us! And that certainly includes taking care of us in the future.

Worrying about the future provokes the Lord because it means we’re turning our financial security into an idol. It provokes the Lord because our security is taking *His* place in our lives. The “idol” of financial security replaces our trust in God. So let’s not provoke the Lord to anger with our idols!