

## Zimri and Omri, Kings of Israel

### 1 Kings 16:15-28

1 Kings 16:15-20 - *“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 committed 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. 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?”*

#### Background Notes for Section One of 1 Kings 16:15-28

1 Kings 16:15-20 is the record of wicked King Zimri, the fifth king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Zimri reigned for only seven days (v15). Not very long and successful reign, was it? Apparently Zimri assassinated King Elah when most of the army was down in Philistine territory, besieging the city of Gibbethon. But Zimri did not have the support of the military. When they heard that Zimri had taken the throne, the army sided with General Omri and made him king.

Omri quickly made his move. He brought the troops up from Gibbethon and besieged the capital city of Tirzah. When Zimri saw that he had no chance, and he didn’t have the support of the military, he burned the palace down around him rather than be taken alive. Thus ended the shortest reign and shortest dynasty in Israel’s history.

#### Doctrinal Point for Section One of 1 Kings 16:15-28

**Whatever a man sows, he will also reap.**

The Bible says, *“Whatever a man sows, he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7)*. Just as this principle is true in nature, it is also true in our lives. We will reap a crop of whatever kind of seed we sow! This biblical truth was illustrated again and again in the lives of the kings of Israel. Jeroboam I, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and now Zimri are examples of this principle:

*“Whatever a man sows, he will also reap.”* Just seven days after he committed treason, assassinated King Elah, and usurped the throne, Zimri quickly reaped what he had sown. Job 20:5 says, *“The triumph of the wicked is short.”* How true that was in Zimri’s life – and death!

Although God used Zimri as a rod of judgment against the wicked dynasty of Baasha and Elah (v12-13), Zimri was responsible before God for his treachery and murder. Before God, he was responsible for the evil acts that he committed. Just as it was true in Zimri's life, God's moral law holds true in the lives of each one of us today as well. Whatever a man sows, he will also reap.

## **Practical Application for Section One of 1 Kings 16:15-28**

**Expect your position of power to be short-lived, if it's wrongfully gained.**

We certainly see that truth illustrated in Zimri's life. Is it possible that you're in a position of power that you have gained wrongfully? Remember Zimri. In your business or your place of work, have you gained your present position by stepping on others? Remember Zimri. Maybe you're in a leadership position in your church, or in a Christian ministry, or area of Christian service, but you grabbed the position that God had intended for someone else. Remember Zimri. If it's wrongfully gained, you can expect your position of power to be short-lived.

Some of you may be thinking, "But some kings in Israel gained power wrongfully, and then they went on for years!" Well, that's true, and it can be true today as well - but the overall lesson is: As a general rule in life, if you've gained your position of power in a wrongful way, expect that your power will be short-lived. In other words, God has ways of bringing you down if you've gained power by wrongful means.

An elderly Christian man whom I know is very bitter toward his former Christian friends, and he's bitter towards God. I think he'll die bitter. Why? In his younger years this man manipulated himself into a position of power in his church, and God had to bring him down suddenly, before he destroyed the church. It's a very sad story, but it illustrates this lesson. Expect your position of power to be short-lived if it's wrongfully gained.

*1 Kings 16:21:28 – "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.*

*In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah. And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two 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 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. 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. Then Ahab his son reigned in his place."*

## **Background Notes for Section Two of 1 Kings 16:15-28**

This section of 1 Kings 16 is the record of Omri, the fifth king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Omri, the father of the notorious King Ahab, came to the throne in about 880 or 885BC.

When Zimri's short seven-day reign came to a disastrous end, civil war erupted in the northern kingdom of Israel (v21). Half the people followed General Omri, who had overthrown Zimri, and half tried to make a man named Tibni the king. When we compare the dates in verse 23 with verse 15, we see that the civil war between Omri and Tibni went on for about four years. Then General Omri prevailed and overpowered Tibni.

King Omri established the fourth dynasty in the northern kingdom of Israel. It was the most powerful of all the dynasties in the northern kingdom of Israel. The Omri dynasty consisted of four kings: Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram – a powerful dynasty in the northern kingdom.

After reigning for six years with Tirzah as his capital city, Omri moved the capital of the northern kingdom to Samaria, seven miles west of Tirzah (v24). He probably moved this capital to Samaria for more than one reason. First, the new capital would be on neutral political grounds. Remember - there had been civil war, so certainly some politics were involved in the move. Another likely reason was that the hill of Samaria was higher ground, and more easily defended. If you visit Samaria, you'll see that it would have been easy to defend it as a capital city. And of course, maybe Omri just wanted to build a new place! After all, Zimri had burned the palace down around him.

In any case, some of the ruins of the buildings from the reigns of both King Omri and King Ahab can still be seen today.

## **Doctrinal Point for Section Two of 1 Kings 16:15-28**

### **God's view of greatness is different than man's view of greatness.**

Omri became a very powerful king, and he was able to bring a measure of peace and prosperity to Israel. We learn this from the Scripture record, and secular history corroborates the biblical record. Omri is mentioned on the well-known archaeological find, the "Moabite Stone," that dates back to the 9th century BC. In addition, there are references to the house of Omri and the land of Omri in ancient Assyrian records. So Omri was quite well known internationally in that day.

Omri was great in the world's eyes - but look at what God said about Omri in verse 25: *"Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him."* God's view of greatness is very different than the world's view of greatness. Omri was great in the world's eyes - but God had a different view.

Omri was like Herod the Great. Remember King Herod the Great who ruled at the time of our Lord? Herod is well known in secular history as “Herod the Great.” Some of his massive building projects still stand today, including the Western Wall of the Temple platform in Jerusalem (formerly called the Wailing Wall). That massive structure was built over 2000 years ago by Herod the Great.

But King Herod is not called “Great” in Scripture. You won’t find “Herod the Great” anywhere in Scripture - only in secular historical references. In the Bible he’s known as the king who killed the babies in Bethlehem. That horrible deed is the way he’s known in the Bible. God’s view of greatness is very different than man’s view of greatness.

## Practical Application for Section Two of 1 Kings 16:15-28

### Are you great in God’s eyes?

King Omri and King Herod the Great were great and important kings in secular history. Remnants of their building projects can still be seen today. However, although they were great in mankind’s eyes, they were not great in God’s eyes.

Are *you* great in God’s eyes? You might be thinking, “Well, I’m not like Omri. He was a Jewish, and an unbeliever. In fact, he was an idolater.” True. But even if you’re a Christian, you can be great in man’s eyes but not in God’s eyes.

When chatting with some of my students the other day I mentioned, “I can’t think of a worse situation than, after becoming a Christian at a young age, to spend my life making it really big in this world - big bucks, lots of power, and well-known as a successful man. But then to retire, and to suddenly realize that I hadn’t done much at all for the Lord! Maybe so busy becoming great in the world’s eyes that I had done next to nothing for the Lord! And I only had a few years left!” What an awful realization. I can’t think of a worse feeling, can you? I hope that won’t be true in your life.

Young people - don’t let this happen to you! Strive to be great in **God’s eyes**, rather than the eyes of mankind. Don’t blow it! Start putting your energies into serving the Lord **right now!** There will come a time in your life when it will be too late to decide to be great in God’s eyes. Let’s all ask ourselves that question: Am I great in **God’s eyes**?