FIRST KINGS

Chapter 16

**Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha: 2 “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. 3 So I am about to consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat. 4 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.” 5 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? 6 Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. And Elah his son succeeded him as king. 7 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, provoking him to anger by the things he did, and becoming like the house of Jeroboam—and also because he destroyed it.**

**16:1** *Jehu.* Like his father before him (see 2Ch 16:7–10), Jehu brought God’s word of condemnation to a king. Much as the man of God from Judah (see note on 13:1) and later the prophet Amos, he was sent from the south to a northern king. His ministry continued for about 50 years until the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah (2Ch 19:2; 20:34). (CSB)

**16:2** *I lifted you up from the dust.* Cf. 14:7. (CSB)

*walked in the ways of Jeroboam.* See note on 14:16. (CSB)

**16:3** *consume Baasha and his house.* Cf. 14:10 (the house of Jeroboam); 21:21 (the house of Omri and Ahab). (CSB)

**16:4** Identical to the prophecy against Jeroboam’s dynasty in 14:11.

**16:5** *his achievements.* For the purposes of the writer of Kings (see Introduction: Theme), it was not necessary to list any of Baasha’s achievements. He may have been a very successful ruler from a military-political point of view. (CSB)

*annals of the kings of Israel.* See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:6** *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1:21. (CSB)

**16:7** *evil he had done … like the house of Jeroboam.* See v. 2; 15:34. (CSB)

*he destroyed it.* Although Baasha fulfilled God’s purpose (14:10, 14) in destroying the house of Jeroboam, he remained responsible for this violent and unlawful act (cf. Ge 50:20; Isa 10:5–7, 12). (CSB)

***Elah King of Israel***

**8 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. 9 Zimri, one of his officials, who had command of half his chariots, plotted against him. Elah was in Tirzah at the time, getting drunk in the home of Arza, the man in charge of the palace at Tirzah. 10 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. 11 As soon as he began to reign and was seated on the throne, he killed off Baasha’s whole family. He did not spare a single male, whether relative or friend. 12 So Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu— 13 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. 14 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?**

**16:8** *twenty-sixth year of Asa.* 886 b.c. (see note on 15:10; see also Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

*two years.* 886–885 b.c. (CSB)

**16:9** *getting drunk.* The fact that Elah was carousing at Tirzah while the army was laying siege to Gibbethon (v. 15) indicates he had little perception of his responsibilities as king. (CSB)

**16:10** *twenty-seventh year of Asa.* 885 b.c. (CSB)

**16:11** *killed off Baasha’s whole family.* See 15:29; 2Ki 10:1–7; 11:1. (CSB)

*friend.* Probably the chief adviser to the king (see note on 2Sa 15:37). (CSB)

**16:12** *word of the Lord… through the prophet Jehu.* See vv. 1–4. Zimri did not consciously decide to fulfill Jehu’s prophecy, but unwittingly he became the instrument by which Jehu’s prediction was fulfilled (see note on v. 7) when he conspired against Elah and destroyed the dynasty of Baasha. (CSB)

**16:13** *sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed.* See 15:34. (CSB)

*worthless idols.* A reference to all the paganism in Israel’s religious observances, including the use of the golden calves in worship (see 12:28; 14:9). (CSB)

**16:14** *annals of the kings of Israel.* See note on 14:19. (CSB)

***Zimri King of Israel***

**15 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. 16 When the Israelites in the camp heard that Zimri had plotted against the king and murdered him, they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day there in the camp. 17 Then Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. 18 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 died, 19 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. 20 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?**

**16:15** *twenty-seventh year of Asa.* 885 b.c. (see notes on 15:1, 10). (CSB)

*Gibbethon.* See notes on v. 9; 15:27. (CSB)

**16:16** *plotted against the king and murdered him.* See vv. 9–12. (CSB)

*Omri, the commander of the army.* He held a higher rank than Zimri did under Elah (v. 9). (CSB)

**16:17** *Tirzah.* The royal residence (see vv. 8–10; see also note on 14:17). (CSB)

**16:19** *ways of Jeroboam.* See note on 14:16. (CSB)

**16:20** *annals of the kings of Israel.* See note on 14:19. (CSB)

***Omri King of Israel***

**21 Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri. 22 But Omri’s followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king. 23 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. 24 He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. 25 But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him. 26 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. 27 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? 28 Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.**

**16:22** *Tibni died.* It is not clear whether Tibni’s death was due to natural causes or the result of the military struggle for control of the land. (CSB)

**16:23** *thirty-first year of Asa.* 880 b.c. (see note on 15:10; see also Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

*became king.* Became sole king. The struggle for control of the northern kingdom between Omri and Tibni lasted four years (compare this verse with v. 15). (CSB)

*twelve years.* 885–874. The 12 years of Omri’s reign include the four years of struggle between Omri and Tibni (cf. vv. 15, 29). (CSB)

*Tirzah.* See note on 14:17. Omri had been able to capture Tirzah in a matter of days (vv. 15–19). (CSB)

**16:24** *Samaria.* Seven miles northwest of Shechem, Samaria rose about 300 feet above the surrounding fertile valleys (referred to as a “wreath” in Isa 28:1). The original owner may have been persuaded to sell his property (see 21:3) on the condition that the city be named after him (cf. Ru 4:5). The site provided an ideal location for a nearly impregnable capital city for the northern kingdom (see 20:1–21; 2Ki 6:25; 18:9–10). With the establishment of this royal city, the kings of the north came to possess a royal citadel-city like that of the Davidic dynasty (see 2Sa 5:6–12). Archaeologists have discovered that Omri and Ahab also adorned it with magnificent structures to rival those Solomon had erected in Jerusalem. From this time on, the northern kingdom could be designated by the name of the royal city, just as the southern kingdom could be designated by its capital, Jerusalem (see, e.g., 21:1; Isa 10:10; Am 6:1). (CSB)

**16:25** *sinned more than all.* Omri’s alliance with Ethbaal of Tyre and Sidon (Omri’s son Ahab married Ethbaal’s daughter Jezebel to seal the alliance) led to widespread Baal worship in the northern kingdom (vv. 31–33) and eventually to the near extinction of the Davidic line in the southern kingdom (see 2Ki 11; see also note on 2Ki 8:18). This marriage alliance must have been established in the early years of Omri’s reign (see note on v. 23), perhaps to strengthen his hand against Tibni (see vv. 21–22). (CSB)

**16:26** *sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.* See 12:26–33; see also note on

14:16. *worthless idols.* See note on v. 13. (CSB)

**16:27** *things he achieved.* Omri’s military and political accomplishments were not of importance for the purposes of the writer of Kings (see Introduction: Theme). Apart from establishing Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom, about all that is known of him is that he organized a governmental structure in the northern kingdom that was in place during the rule of his son, Ahab (see 20:14–15). Omri’s dynasty, however, endured for over 40 years. A century and a half later (732 b.c.) Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria referred to Israel as the “house of Omri” in his annals. (CSB)

*annals of the kings of Israel.* See note on 14:19. (CSB)

**16:28** *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1:21. (CSB)

***Ahab Becomes King of Israel***

**29 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. 30 Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. 31 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, and began to serve Baal and worship him. 32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. 33 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. 34 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.**

**16:29** *thirty-eighth year of Asa.* 874 b.c. (see notes on 15:9–10). *twenty-two years.* 874–853 b.c. (CSB)

**16:30** *more evil … than any.* Omri sinned more than those before him (see v. 25), and Ahab sinned more than his father had. Evil became progressively worse in the royal house of the northern kingdom. Nearly a third of the narrative material in 1,2 Kings concerns the 34-year period of the reigns of Ahab and his two sons, Ahaziah and Joram. In this period the struggle between the kingdom of God (championed especially by Elijah and Elisha) and the kingdom of Satan was especially intense. (CSB)

**16:31** *married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal.* The Jewish historian Josephus refers to Ethbaal as a king-priest who ruled over Tyre and Sidon for 32 years. Ahab had already married Jezebel during the reign of his father (see note on v. 25). (CSB)

*Baal.* Perhaps Melqart, the local manifestation of Baal in Tyre, whose worship was brought to Israel by Jezebel. It is probable that Ahab participated in the worship of this deity at the time of his marriage. The names of Ahab’s sons (Ahaziah, “The Lord grasps”; Joram, “The Lord is exalted”) suggest that Ahab did not intend to replace the worship of the Lord with the worship of Baal but to worship both deities in a syncretistic way. (CSB)

**16:32** *temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.* Ahab imported the Phoenician Baal worship of his wife Jezebel into the northern kingdom by constructing a temple of Baal in Samaria, just as Solomon had erected the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. This pagan temple and its sacred stone (see note on 14:23) were later destroyed by Jehu (2Ki 10:21–27). (CSB)

**16:33** *Asherah pole.* See note on 14:15. (CSB)

*than did all the kings of Israel.* See note on v. 30. Ahab elevated the worship of Baal to an official status in the northern kingdom at the beginning of his reign. (CSB)

**16:34** *rebuilt Jericho.* Does not mean that Jericho had remained uninhabited since its destruction by Joshua (see Jos 18:21; Jdg 1:16; 3:13; 2Sa 10:5), but that it had remained an unwalled town or village. During the rule of Ahab, Hiel fortified the city by reconstructing its walls and gates (see 9:17 for a similar use of “rebuild”). This violated God’s intention that the ruins of Jericho (Jos 6:26) be a perpetual reminder that Israel had received the land of Canaan from God’s hand as a gift of grace. Accordingly, Hiel suffered the curse Joshua had pronounced. (CSB)