

## 1st Kings Chapters 15-16 – John Karmelich

1. My title for today is, "How to have a positive attitude when dealing with a bad egg". That term "bad egg" refers here to bad Israelite kings, but it can refer to a problem of a person that we have to deal with our lives. Specifically it refers to a bunch of bad kings that rule over Israel for about a fifty-year period (about 950-900 B.C.) when both the Northern and the Southern Israel Kingdom had some pretty bad eggs as kings. There is only one king in this text that is praised. The others are a bunch of idolaters, murderers and pretty much nobody we would ever want ruling over us let alone having to deal with.
2. So let me ask the important question first: Why should we use our valuable time learning about all of this ancient history? Yes it is part of the bible and it does show part of the downfall of both of these kingdoms. Yes it shows the price to be paid in life for turning from God's desire for our lives. However most of us reading this text are already Christians, who believed that Jesus paid the complete price for our sins. So again, why should we study all of this ancient history?
  - a) To answer this, first remember that no bad how life gets at times, this life is the only one we get to live. Therefore, we can choose to have a good attitude through it all or we can choose to be miserable. We can choose to remember that this world is condemned and we're saved because of our trust in Jesus or we can get depressed about our situation.
  - b) That's a good start to the positive attitude. The next thing I have learned both in life and from studying the bible is that God is still in charge and He has a plan. I find if we keep that in mind, we can have a good attitude through the worst of situations. Any of us who have lived a good while will tell you that life can be difficult at times and it can seem like there is no end in sight, like the times of these chapters. The question we have to ask is, "Are we going to choose to be miserable about our situation, or are we going to choose to have a good attitude through whatever problems we have to face in life?"
    - i) Time for a quick disclaimer. I'm not talking about true mental depression. I have had my own fight with that. If such periods come in one's life, tackle it spiritually, physically (e.g., exercise) and seek medical help. By going at it that way, I've seen some very good people emerge well from the worse of depressions.
3. With all of that said, let me now come back to these chapters. One thing that one notices as one reads both First and Second Kings is that a good king comes around every now and then. There are none in the North and about 1 of every 3 kings in the South. It's almost as if one king thinks despite how my mother and father acted, I'm going to seek God and undue some of the damage that they did. We'll get some of that as we read through these chapters.
  - a) To be honest, most of the kings that we read about here are "bad eggs". However, we will get one good one that rules for a long time. You may think as you go through this text, all of these guys lived a long time ago and I have my own problems to deal with than have to think about a bunch of kings that lived about 3,000 years ago. The issue to consider is not the life of these kings, but their attitude toward God and toward life in general.
  - b) Think of it this way: If God could still be in control of the world despite these guys being in charge of His people, God could still desire the best for you and me despite whatever it is we have to deal with in our lives. As I like to put it, God never promises His followers that life will be easy. He does promise to guide us through whatever it is we have to deal with as we live to make a difference for Him. The secret is to realize that we never have to take it on ourselves. This is another reason why He desires we work as a team to make a difference for Him in this world. In other words, if depression sets us, get help, not just seeking God, but professionally and the help of others to see you through it.
  - c) OK, these two chapters are depressing enough as it is. I don't need to add anything to it. Let's now read our way through them, to help us learn how to cope through some of the worst as well as best times one can have in life.

4. Chapter 15, Verse 1: In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah,<sup>2</sup> and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.
- a) I will be the first to admit, one of the hardest things to do in Kings is keeping track of who is who, and who belongs to what kingdom. It's confusing because time is marked for one kingdom by the other kingdom. For example the text might say, "In the 18th year of the reign of king of the Northern Kingdom, this guy is now king of the Southern Kingdom".
    - i) Let me give you some good news. I am convinced that when we get to heaven, God is not going to quiz us on the names and dates of all these kings. I've been studying this for many years and I still don't remember who is who or when was when. Therefore, don't panic if you forget some of these details. I'm just grateful that I can just copy and paste these names and I don't have to pronounce them.
    - ii) With that said, the lessons for us about all of these kings has to do with learning how God rules over history, teaches to us in advance and that prophesy works in patterns, not just predictions. What I mean by that is these same patterns of how these kings ruled will repeat themselves through history and even may show us some patterns about our own rulers over our lives. With that disclaimer stated, let us now talk about the specific ruler of the Southern Kingdom stated here.
  - b) The focus of the moment is on a king of the Southern Kingdom named Abijah. He would be the great grandson of King David. One thing you will notice as you study the kings is the text likes to list the king's mother: Why is that? My best guess is while the king is out being the king, it is the mother who was the most influential on raising up the next king. What one learns about kids is sometimes how they turn out is just plain luck, but a lot of how they act is based on how they are raised. As far as these chapters are concerned, the mothers of the kings can both share in the good and the bad that the kings do in life.
  - c) With that background stated, it is time to talk about this great grandson of King David:
5. Verse 3: He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong.<sup>5</sup> For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD's commands all the days of his life--except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.
- a) Time for some of my very loose translation: This king was a bad egg like his father. This king allowed idolatry to exist in the Southern Kingdom like his father. However, God did allow him to remain king for a time due to the unconditional promise made to this king's great grandfather David.
  - b) From our perspective, God had a dilemma: On one hand He cannot tolerate any sin at all, especially if it is by the king over His people. On the other hand, He made a promise to David that his descendants would be kings until the one comes that would rule forever. The dilemma is how much does God tolerate with each king before He says, "enough is enough, time to try someone else". The point as it applies to you and me is God has every right to say to us when it comes to our sin issues, enough is enough. That does not mean he can or would take away our salvation, but enough turning from Him could and would cause us to lose our opportunities to be a good witness for Him to others. This is about His name and His reputation being on the line.
  - c) This leads us back to Abijah, the king of the moment over the Southern Kingdom. God made a promise to his great grandfather that his descendants would be kings. How can God wipe him out for being a bad king and still keep His promises to David, because he was loyal to Him all of his life, except for the affair with Bathsheba. If you don't know, the reference in Verse 5 is to that affair. Uriah the Hittite was the husband of Bathsheba that David had killed to cover up his affair. Second Samuel Chapter 11 covers that story.

- d) However, I'm not going to reopen that issue about David, other to say that he did turn back to God after suffering heavily for that sin. Meanwhile Abijah in comparison refused to turn to God like his father Rehoboam after he rebelled against God. In summary, like father like son, in that both of them lived lives that were not pleasing to God.
  - e) While we can read more about Abijah's life in Chronicles and some good that he did, in effect all we need to know is the statement, "His life didn't please God". Think of that as his tombstone marker as that is all we need to know.
6. Verse 6: There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's lifetime.<sup>7</sup> As for the other events of Abijah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.<sup>8</sup> And Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. And Asa his son succeeded him as king.
- a) Let me state Verse 6 in plain English: Abijah grew up as a prince, as the next king of the Southern Kingdom and the son of King Rehoboam. He grew up watching battles brew between the two kings either in border issues or all out warfare. After his father died, he had to continue to lead the Southern Kingdom through this war.
  - b) Now for Verse 7 in plain English: If you want to find out more about what Abijah did as the king, you can read his story in 2nd Chronicles, Chapter 13. However, this isn't a study of Chronicles but the two-volume book of Kings. Therefore all you really need to know about this king was that he was a "bad egg".
  - c) Finally in Verse 8: Abijah died as the king and his son Asa took over as the next king. So is that all we have to learn about this king here, that he was a bad egg as you call him? In a sense yes. Coming back to my reference to tombstones, most of them have the date one was born and the date one died. In between those dates is a dash. The key to living a life pleasing to God is to have our dash make a difference for Him. That is the question that each of us have to worry about. In effect, this kings' dash was bad, and that is all we need to know about him. Onto the next king:
7. Verse 9: In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah,<sup>10</sup> and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.<sup>11</sup> Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done.<sup>12</sup> He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made.<sup>13</sup> He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.<sup>14</sup> Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life.<sup>15</sup> He brought into the temple of the LORD the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.
- a) Speaking of making one's "dash" either good or bad, we now read of the next king of the Southern Kingdom named Asa. To put it simply, he was a good king. Despite having a father and a grandfather who turned away from God, Asa thought in effect, "Enough is enough, I'm not going to live like those losers and do what God commanded me to do".
  - b) Let me for a moment come back to my lesson title: How to have a positive attitude when dealing with a bad egg of a person." Imagine living under the reign of the last two kings. Neither one of them lived a life pleasing to God. One must wonder is this going to go on forever? Now out of nowhere we get a good king come on the scene that has a heart for God and does what is right. My point is when things do go from bad to worse and it does not seem like there is an end in sight, out of "nowhere" God can send us an "Asa" to show that there is some hope when things seem hopeless.
  - c) As to the specific good things Asa did, I'll get to those in a moment. First notice that Asa was mainly raised by an ungodly grandmother named Maacah in Verse 10. Then we read in Verse 13 that Asa removed Maacah from being the queen mother for doing something that was not pleasing to God. My point is just as bad kings or bad people can come from good upbringing, so can a good person survive a bad upbringing as the case here.

- i) If we get nothing else out of this lesson, it shows the importance of praying for our children, our grandchildren and our leaders. They may come from a good or bad home, but their hearts can still be controlled by God as we will read of Asa here. A good upbringing increases the odds of success, but Asa is an example that one can still be pleasing to God despite a bad upbringing.
  - d) With that said, let's talk briefly about what the text says he did that pleased God. First, give him credit for having the guts to remove the woman who raised him to be the king. His grandmother who probably raised him, also was made biblically famous for making a "repulsive Asherah pole" as stated in Verse 14. Let me keep this fairly clean: An Asherah pole is a sexually obscene image that people worshiped. This deity promised prosperity by enticing him sexually. That prosperity is for more children as well as wealth or power. Instead of looking to God for those things, the Israelites started to go after the local deities and performed illicit sexual acts to entice this deity.
    - i) Speaking of illicit sexual acts, Verse 11 mentions, "male shrine prostitutes". Those were homosexual men who's professional job it was to have sex to entice this god. King Asa said about this in effect, "Enough is enough, time to cut down the image that grandma made and time to get these male shrine prostitutes out of God's land as these acts are not pleasing to Him."
    - ii) I could go from here and give a lecture on the public acceptance of homosexuality but I suspect most of us can see the connection. Whenever someone tells me that people are born that way, I tell them to research studies of identical twins and that issue. My point is there is no study showing a 100% connection between identical twins and one being a homosexual. I am convinced some people have a desire for that lifestyle, but that does not mean one has to submit to that desire. The issue for all of us comes back to are we going to live to fulfill whatever desires we have, or are we going to live to live to make a difference for God? I am also not saying that we all have to be perfect. However, we have to recognize sin as sin and we willing to turn from it when we turn from God's desire for our own lives.
  - e) Meanwhile, let me get back on safer ground and get back to King Asa. The last thing the text tells us is that there were silver and gold things dedicated to God that his father then used for his personal use. The point is what is dedicated to God, has to remain that way. Just as when we dedicate our lives to making a difference for God, once we have made that commitment, we are "stuck" that way. As I stated in the last lesson, being a Christian costs us everything and nothing at the same time. It cost us nothing as Jesus paid the full price for our sins. It cost us everything in that God now expects us to live our lives fully for Him in all that we do. The point here is King Asa took things that have been given for God's use and rededicated them for that use.
  - f) In summary, I'm sure King Asa made mistakes in his life, but his "dash" on his tombstone shows that he did live a life pleasing to God. That is essentially all God wants us to know about him.
  - g) In the meantime, there was still the matter of the war between the two kingdoms and that leads us well to the next two verses:
8. Verse 16: There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns. <sup>17</sup>Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.
- a) We haven't discussed Baasha yet. He's the next king of the Northern Kingdom. The point here is simply that in this war, Baasha was in the process of building a big wall in a city a few miles north of Jerusalem (capital of the Southern Kingdom) to say in effect, "This wall is now the border between our two kingdoms." Think of this as the "Iron Curtain" if you know what that was historically or the wall that existed in Berlin in the late 20th Century. The wall was essentially, "no one may cross this wall". Asa's wall response is coming up:

9. Verse 18: Asa then took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD's temple and of his own palace. He entrusted it to his officials and sent them to Ben-Hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. <sup>19</sup> "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me."
- a) Remember from a few pages back how I said that King Asa took the silver and gold that had been dedicated to God and put them back in the temple? Well that didn't last long. Now King Asa wants this wall to come down, so he takes out the silver and gold that was dedicated to God and uses it to bribe the king who ruled over the city of Damascus.
  - b) The point is not everything King Asa did was pleasing to God. When times got tough, he for this moment turned from God and trusted in the gold and silver to win the battle with the current king of the Northern Kingdom. Yes I could explain to you wonderful historic details of how the Damascus kings changed his allegiance to King Asa based on this bribe and helped to tear down that wall. We'll get some of that in the upcoming verses.
  - c) What is important for us is to show how God does test us. Think about what we dedicate to God's use: It could be some time we allocate for study or just going to church. It could be some commitment we made to help in some regards. Yes there are emergencies where we have to change our commitments. That's not the issue. The issue is, do we still trust in Him when the going gets rough? Asa failed that test here. Are we still going to dedicate the time and commitment we gave to God when other choices are appealing? That is the issue that all us must choose on a daily basis. In the meantime, back to King Asa.
10. Verse 20: Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maacah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. <sup>21</sup> When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. <sup>22</sup> Then King Asa issued an order to all Judah--no one was exempt--and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using there. With them King Asa built up Geba in Benjamin, and also Mizpah.
- a) The short version here is when the King of Damascus switched his allegiance from the North to the South, it changed the war. The King of North Israel stopped his wall project. Then the Southern King ordered everyone living in the South to help tear down the wall and use that building material to build up two other cities. Also, there were some other cities that were conquered because the Damascus king joined the Southern side.
  - b) But John, this all seems pretty positive. The king took some of his temple gold, bought off the guy who was helping his enemy and now the King over Jerusalem was winning. If I was living in the Southern Kingdom, I would want to win this war and I would probably choose to give that gold and silver for some outside help.
  - c) The problem is what seems like the right thing to do by human standards is usually not what God desires us to do. He wants us to trust in Him for our victories. But can't we trust in Him and then get some outside help? Yes, but then who gets the credit? What one learns fairly quickly as a believer is God does not share His glory with anyone. It is usually after we have exhausted all our options when God likes to step into our lives to show that He and He alone can give us victory when such victories seem impossible.
  - d) Let me give a practical example here. Suppose we are sick. Shouldn't we go see a doctor? Of course. However, we give God the credit for using that doctor as well as thanking the doctor and the nurses for their help. The issue is about using the resources that we have dedicated to God and then no longer trusting in God but those resources. That was Asa's mistake here and the common mistake that we make as Christians.
  - e) Suppose we already committed some resources to a project for God and now we discover we can't pay the rent? Do we take back that commitment we made? I may ask for relief, but I also know He knows my needs and I'll trust Him to see me through my tough times.

11. Verse 23: As for all the other events of Asa's reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In his old age, however, his feet became diseased. <sup>24</sup> Then Asa rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of his father David. And Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king.
- a) Here we get the epilogue to the life of King Asa. The text says that "Chronicles" gives us more details about his life, but essentially he was a king that God approved of. Of course he made mistakes and suffered for those mistakes. Still, I believe he is saved not because he was 98% good, but because he fully trusted in God for his life despite his faults.
  - b) The text has this strange reference to having a "foot disease" in his old age. It may be that this foot problem killed him, but we don't know. I look at the text this way: The previous text talked about how he dedicated some of the gold and silver that was dedicated to God to win the war and he didn't suffer for it. However his feet suffered I believe to show how he did walk away from God with part of his life. We associate our feet with walking. The text says how he walked away from God when it came to what he dedicated. One can see the guilt association here, so I won't press the point.
  - c) The text ends with the point that Jehoshaphat was the next king of the South. However, neither this chapter nor the next one deals with him, so we won't bring up his name again for a few lessons. King Asa reigned for a long time and the rest of the lesson will focus on the Northern Kings who seem to come and go in "bulk", while Asa was ruling as the King of the South. Again, I don't want you to become obsessed with names or who ruled over where, but just to learn the lessons about how these kings ruled and how they apply to our lives. With that said, it's time to go back to the Northern Kingdom.
12. Verse 25: Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. <sup>26</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of his father and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.
- a) So you know, we are now "backtracking" in time to show what is happening up north at the time of King Asa down south. Remember Jeroboam the rebel? He ruled a little longer than Rehoboam down south up until the start of King Asa. Then Jeroboam's son named Nadab ruled for two years up north. Just as King Jeroboam turned from God, so his son did the same. The text says Nadab did evil in God's eyes living like his father. In effect that is all you need to know about Nadab. Short version: Bad egg, let's move on.
13. Verse 27: Baasha son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar plotted against him, and he struck him down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it. <sup>28</sup> Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah and succeeded him as king. <sup>29</sup> As soon as he began to reign, he killed Jeroboam's whole family. He did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all, according to the word of the LORD given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite-- <sup>30</sup> because of the sins Jeroboam had committed and had caused Israel to commit, and because he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger.
- a) A few pages back I mentioned that the next king of the Northern Kingdom was named Baasha. Here we read that he was not a descendant of Jeroboam, but an outsider who killed not only the king, but his whole family. If you read the last lesson, you may recall that a prophet traveled to see King Jeroboam to tell him that his whole family would be killed for turning from God? (This is the same prophet who was told not to eat or drink in the Northern Kingdom and died after he stopped for lunch with a lying prophet.)
  - b) The bottom line here is that we are now seeing that prophecy come to pass. This outsider named Baasha was fulfilling that prophesy. He not only killed the current king, but killed the whole family probably so no one would take revenge upon Him.
  - c) Now for the tough question: Is Baasha still guilty of murder if God predicted this would occur? Was Judas still guilty of betraying Jesus if He knew and predicted this event? This is the classic case of "perspective". Just because the bible predicts something doesn't mean it is the right thing to do. Baasha is still guilty of committing murder here, period.

- d) Before we move on, let me give another illustration of this principal. Suppose I tell you that someone is going to murder your child. Does that mean the murderer can get away with it because I predicted it correctly? Of course not. In this bible story, innocent people suffered due to the action of a murderer. Just because the text says it will happen does not excuse the action. That's the point here.
14. Verse 31: As for the other events of Nadab's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? <sup>32</sup> There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns. <sup>33</sup> In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. <sup>34</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of Jeroboam and in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit.
- a) The chapter ends by telling us the long lost records of the Northern Kingdom record more stuff about the kings of the North. However all we need to know is that Nadab was a bad king and the guy who killed him Baasha was no better. Baasha was king for 24 years, but he was still evil as far as God was concerned and continued worshipping idols just as the family of Jeroboam had done. Bottom line: Another bad egg is coming and going. In the meantime, we still have to go from bad to worse in the Northern Kingdom, which is why my lesson title is what it is. With that said, it is time to talk about the next bad king of the Northern Kingdom, which is the start of Chapter 16:
15. Chapter 16, Verse 1: 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."
- a) This chapter starts by introducing us to a new character named Jehu. All we know about him is that is a prophet of God. We don't know how he became one or how God spoke to him about being a prophet. As I stated in the last lesson, the word prophecy just means to "speak first". The term implies that one is speaking God's word to someone else. We tend to think of this word being used with predicting the future, but that is only a small part of what that idea means. If one is teaching the bible or a biblical principal to someone, then one is prophesying.
- b) Speaking of the last lesson, we get another "repeat" in this paragraph. In the last lesson, we had a prophet travel from the Southern Kingdom to the Northern Kingdom to tell the king of North in effect, "I God, raised you up to be a leader over my people the Israelites. Instead of worshipping Me, you turned to idolatry and lead the people to idolatry. Now you and your whole family will die due to your sin". That prophecy was given to a king named Jeroboam. Now here we are two chapters later. Another prophet is giving a very similar message to another king of the Northern Kingdom named Baasha. The message is almost word for word the same. This king is about to suffer the same fate.
- c) OK too bad for him. Why should I care? The point to teach is that prophecy is "patterns". That just means the same way God works one day is the same way he works the next day. If we have committed our lives to serving God and decide to turn from Him to worship other deities, we can suffer the same fate. So are you saying God can and would wipe out my whole family if say, I convert to Islam or become a Buddhist monk? First, remember that the issue is leadership. A better example might be if one is called to lead a church or lead a bible study. God can and would take away that ministry if we make the decision to turn away from Him first. That lack of obedience can and would affect our whole family and that is the pattern to be considered based on these verses.
- d) Coming back to the text, just like another prophet told Jeroboam a generation earlier, so this prophet is predicting the death of Bashaa's entire family. The text doesn't repeat the whole, "Arrest him, hand shrived up" stuff, but one gets the idea Baasha got the message.

16. Verse 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? <sup>6</sup> Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. And Elah his son succeeded him as king.
- Time for more of John's loose translation: This king did other stuff, but as far as God was concerned, this was another "bad egg", so the other stuff doesn't matter.
  - The king's death was recorded here, but not violently. Just like King Jeroboam, the pattern of prophecy is going to affect his family. Let me explain it this way: when one gets older, one starts to care about one's legacy. In this text a prophet is telling the king that because he turned to idolatry, your legacy will be a "bad egg reputation" and your entire family will be wiped out by someone else just as you Baasha (the current bad egg of the moment) wiped out another entire king's family so you (Baasha) can become king yourself.
  - Let me address the issue of "fairness". Is it fair that the whole family of the king has to die because the king was a bad person? Of course not. Ancient kings would commonly kill the entire family out of fear of someone seeking revenge. Yes I can give you the life's not fair speech, but most of us know that already. The point is the actions we do affect those around us and we have to accept those consequences as well as those blessings. The only way I can handle the concept of the unfairness of life is to realize there is a God who will judge all people fairly one day. Since life is unfair, we have to live with that fact the best we can, and again, use our time to make a difference for God in this world. With that not too positive statement out of my system, it is time to get back to the "bad egg" family.
17. Verse 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.
- Now we get an encore reference to the prophet Jehu who was introduced at the start of this chapter. The point of this verse is simply that the prophecy he made, came literally true. Even though this king named Baasha was not killed, his whole family is about to be wiped out as we will read in the next set of verses.
  - Let me explain God's anger. I don't believe in an emotional God. I see this as God acting to help His people. From our perspective it looks like He is angry based on how we act.
18. Verse 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.
- As I stated in the introduction, "time" is confusing in the book of kings as the time of one king is measured based on the time of the other king in the other kingdom. The point as it relates here is while King Asa in the Southern Kingdom was in the 26th year of reigning as king, the son of Baasha, started up north and reigned a whole two years.
  - I admit that if I was in Israel at that time, I would be thinking, "Here is this good king that gets to reign for a long time, while these bad kings are dropping like flies." That alone is evidence that we should be following God as things are more "stable" in the South.
  - The text mentions this next bad king of the North is named Elah and he ruled from a city called "Tirzah". John you said in the last lesson that the Northern Kingdom ruled from a place called "Samaria". That is true. However, that city doesn't become the capital until another bad king coming up in Verse 24. So Tirzah, which is nearby, is the capital of the Northern Kingdom for the moment.
19. Verse 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. <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.
- Time for another "short version": The next king named Elah got drunk one night in the home of a man named Arza. While he was drunk, one of the king's officials named Zimri came in and killed the king. This Zimri became the next king.



- b) OK John, this is getting boring and repetitious. We get one king who is a bad egg, getting killed by another soon to be king who I assume is another "bad egg". That is why my title for this lesson, is "How to have a positive attitude when dealing with a bad egg". To state the obvious, things are going from bad to worse in the Northern Kingdom. What we have to ask ourselves is how do we keep a positive attitude when our lives have that pattern?
    - i) The lesson is about trusting in Him despite the circumstances of the moment. It is to remind ourselves that God is in charge, whether we accept it or not. These kings didn't want to accept it and now they are suffering the consequences. God never promises us all will be wonderful all the time if we trust in Him. He promises to see us through bad times and "bad eggs" if we continue to trust in Him. With that hope of optimism thrown in there, we can move onto my next topic.
  - c) Let me deviate a little and talk a little about alcohol. The king died after getting drunk. A prophet predicted this king would die, so even if he didn't get drunk he would have died some other way. Still, the book of Proverbs teaches us that it is not for Kings to get drunk as it clouds their judgment (Proverbs 31:4). The point for this king is he not only ignored God, but what it was God commanded kings to do. I've lost count of the number of lives I've seen ruined by alcohol. The bible doesn't condemn drinking, but it never condemns getting drunk. Think of it this way: Are you honoring God or doing His will when one is drinking heavily? The issue is simply are we honoring God with our lives or not. On that note of guilt, time to get back to these kings.
  - d) As I read this text, I kept thinking about what if they had newspapers back then? I could just see a headline that reads, "Drunk King Murdered". What did happen to that king got well known somehow and it affected not only the king, but the whole kingdom as a new king is now in charge.
20. Verse 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. <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.
- a) So here we have history repeating itself. We have a new king of the Northern Kingdom named Zimri. The first thing he does is murder Baasha and his entire family. Just like the last king of Israel he did as God predicted. God told Baasha through a prophet because he was a bad egg, God was going to wipe out his entire family. Once again, that does not excuse Zimira for this crime. It just means God choose to reveal this bit of information to Baasha hoping he would repent. Since he didn't, there goes his family.
  - b) As we read this repetitive bit of history of "bad egg, God pronouncing judgment, then the judgment comes true, then the next bad egg of a king comes along and does no better", we never read of repentance. We never read of any of these kings saying to God, "You win, I will do Your will and turn from my sins". Instead we see the repeated pattern of someone given power and then trying to manage that power without God's help. That causes God to say to each of these kings, "Hey, I gave you that power in the first place. You pay me back by turning from Me? Because you haven't learned from history, you will suffer the same fate as the last king.
  - c) OK, so why doesn't God strike down people today when they turn from Him? He does do it, but it is on His timing. Think of all the ruined lives from people who have turned from God and suffered the consequences. The issue is not about salvation, but about us being a good witness to God with our lives.
  - d) Meanwhile, back in ancient history, we have another dead king, another dead family and another king taking over the throne of Northern Israel who doesn't act any better than the last one. In other words, people fail to learn from history and it repeats itself.

21. Verse 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?
- a) For the Israelites living at that time, if they wanted to know more about that king, there was at one time in history, records kept of what this king did. Many suspect that when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD is when those records got lost. However, as far as God is concerned, this is another "bad egg" that had his chance to make a difference for God and wasted that opportunity.
22. Verse 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <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 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.
- a) OK, time for more ancient history. This latest king of the Northern Kingdom lasted a total of seven days. He was overthrown by the head of the army named Omri. Instead of the same story of Omri killing Zimri's family, in this case, when the Israelite soldiers found out that King Zimri killed the previous king and his family, all the soldiers were mad at him for this cowardly act. Zimri didn't want to be hanged for his crime, so he went home and killed himself by setting his house on fire with him inside of it.
    - i) Short version: the latest bad egg of a king lasted seven days before killing himself.
  - b) Let me touch upon suicide for a moment. In fact, yesterday I had to deal with a possible attempt of that act. So you know the epilogue it was a false alarm. Roman Catholics and Judaism both teach that suicide is an unforgivable sin (murder) as one can't repent of that sin. Protestants like myself see it differently. Someone can still have a heart for God, but usually due to mental issues one can be so distraught that they choose to end their lives.
    - i) If heaven is God's domain then He and He alone gets to decide who can be with Him forever there. For those dealing with the suicide of others, seek out help. I know of wonderful Christians who have been called to help families deal with that issue and help them to grieve and deal with such tragedies.
  - c) Meanwhile, it is time for us to get back to "bad egg up North of the moment. This last one lasted a total of seven days before killing himself. Now we read of the next king up north named Omri. Let's see how he does.
23. Verse 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?
- a) Before we get to Omri, we get this short note that all the events of Zimri's short seven day reign as king are recorded in again, the long gone records of the kings of Israel.
24. Verse 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. <sup>22</sup> But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king.
- a) What is happening here is that Omri was not accepted throughout Northern Israel as the king. There was a civil war brewing as half the country wanted someone named Tibri to be the next king and half wanted Omri. I don't know if this was a civil war or just the hot debate topic of the moment, but the result is Omri was the next king of North Israel.
  - b) There are some non-biblical sources that show that Omri, this army general did conquer and rule over other places. However as far as God was concerned, this is another "bad egg", because once again, we have a king over the North, who decides that once he is in power, he doesn't need God's guidance to rule over his life or his people. As we'll read next, Omri did do something else significant and that is build the city of Samaria:

25. Verse 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. <sup>24</sup> 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.
- a) The reason "Samaria" is important is it helps us to understand the New Testament better. One of the false charges against Jesus was that he was a "Samaritan". That is a nickname for the Northern Kingdom of Israel centuries later at the time of Jesus. The reason that the term "Samaritan" became such an insult, is that this kingdom was known for its history of "bad egg" kings, who worshipped idols as well as mixing with non-Jews. Therefore for a religious Jew to call someone a Samaritan during Jesus' time, was meant as an insult. It is like using a racial slur or calling someone a "half breed" today.
  - b) That leads us back to this point in history. When Omri became king, he bought a hill area and named it after the person he bought it from. If you ever travel to Israel, it is actually a good place for a king's palace as it is up on a hill and it is a hard place to conquer.
  - c) The text here says that Omri was king for a total of 12 years. Half of those years he ruled from the previous capital of Tirzah and half from the new capital of Samaria. Know that you know this bit of bible trivia we can get back to how this king was a "bad egg":
26. Verse 25: 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.
- a) You know you are in trouble with God when the bible says that you are worse than all of the kings that came before you. The reason this king was a "bad egg" was not only did he personally turn to idols but he encouraged those who he ruled over to do the same. If you dare to test to see whether or not God will punish you, try getting others who do trust in God to turn from Him. It's almost as if people are shaking their fist at God and saying, "OK, we dare You to prove Yourselves and do something about this?" Personally I've lived long enough that I don't want to join that crowd, but I fear the consequences of living in a society that does choose to do such an action.
  - b) The bottom line back here in ancient history is Omri didn't rule for very long. There are no details given of how this king died, but after a relatively short reign, it was determined that he was another "bad egg", so it is time for the next king to come along.
  - c) The pattern we're seeing here in Northern Israel is each successive king goes from bad to worse. My lesson title was about how to have a positive attitude while dealing with bad eggs. Let's face it; we are getting an endless series of bad eggs here. Besides the families of the kings who got killed, I suspect there were a lot more deaths due to wars during the reigns of these kings let alone the practice of worship of idols. So how does one keep a positive attitude during such times? By remembering that God is in charge, He still wants to rule over our lives and He promises to guide us for His glory through all of "this".
    - i) To put it another way, we can't always choose the circumstances we have to deal with. However, we can always choose what type of attitude to have while dealing with those circumstances. Choosing to have a positive attitude is not only the best way to deal with "bad eggs", but often the only sense of relief during such times.
    - ii) Meanwhile, it's time to read of the death of Omri and gratefully, the last bad egg we have to read about in this lesson.
27. Verse 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? <sup>28</sup> Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.
- a) Once again we get the reference to the death of the king and the fact that the records of what he accomplished are stored in the king's palace. Think of those records as the "dash" on their tombstones. Since they were kings, they had records of their "dash" of how they lived. What matters to us is have we used our "dash" to make a difference for God.

28. Verse 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.<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, 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.
- a) By this time this reads like a broken record, for those of us who remember what a record sounded like when it skipped and got stuck on one spot. The first thing the text tells us as that while the good king Asa was still on the throne down South, we have yet another bad king ruling up North. This king is named Ahab and was the son of Omri.
  - b) When it came to "bad egg" kings, Ahab was the worst of the bunch. That was because not only did he worship an idol but he encouraged the Israelites to do the same.
  - c) He also married a foreigner (if you have ever heard the term Phoenician, that is where this queen was from) who is famous throughout the bible. Her name is Jezebel. Her name in the New Testament becomes a nickname for anyone who decides to turn from God. My point is when one reads of acting like Jezebel (See Revelation 2:20), it refers to one who willfully chooses to turn from God with their lives and encourages others to do so.
  - d) Let me explain the false god "Baal". This god promises good weather, which is important in a desert climate like Israel. The idea was to perform illicit sex in order to entice this god and then one would have good weather and a productive land. That was the temptation for these kings to worship this deity. Its like, "No rain? Quick, let's go have sexual acts in front of this altar and maybe we'll have some rain". While we don't go that far today, one can see how this was tempting to let one's emotions rule over our lives. It was the sinful practices associated with this false god that got the last inhabitants of the land of Israel to get kicked out of there in the first place. Later in history, God ended this kingdom for the same reason of "You've turned from Me, let me now show you the penalty!"
  - e) In the meantime, let's finish up the reference to this bad king named Ahab here:
29. Verse 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.
- a) Centuries earlier in the book of Joshua, he conquered a city of Jericho. That city was torn down to the ground. The lesson then was about dedicating the first of what God gives us back to Him and He promises to bless us based on our trust in Him. The point here is that after Joshua conquered this city, he put a curse on it to say that anyone who rebuilds this city will lose the life of their first born son. (See Joshua 6:26).
  - b) Now we have bad egg King Ahab, not caring about God. He rebuilds the city of Jericho. The man in charge of that project lost both his first and second born son in the project. So we don't miss the point, the text says how Joshua's curse came literally true hundreds of years after he made it. The point for us as we read our bibles is that God's promises and his curses still hold true today hundreds and thousands of years after they were written.
30. If you stuck with me through these two chapters, it gets a little better from here. The next lesson will get into the prophet Elijah who is discussed in both the Old and New Testament. My point is the rest of 1st and 2nd Kings is not a bunch of "this one was good and that one was bad" lectures.
- a) Yes I could have bored us to death with more details about each of these kings. However God wants us to see these kings as He seeks them: In other words "bad eggs" who made the choice to turn from Him with their lives. They all suffered the consequences in their lives as kings and the eternal consequences. To use one last time my tombstone model, they used the dash between their birth and death dates to turn from God and suffered the consequences from their actions. That is the lesson to be gathered from reading this tough history of a bunch of bad eggs. With that said, I'll wrap this up in prayer.

31. Father, we can't change how we have lived in the past. However, we know that we are always welcome to turn back to You with the unknown remaining time in our lives. Help us to use that time to make a difference for You. Life boils down to our trust in God and what have we done with that trust in You. Help us to do whatever it is You have called us to do and be fruitful for You as we have a positive attitude about living a world full of bad eggs so we can work to lead all us bad eggs to have a better relationship with You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.