

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN
1 KINGS 16:22-34

Introduction

After the brief civil war in the northern kingdom that we mentioned last week, Omri, the former commander of Israel's infantry, overcame the followers of Tibni and became the established king of Israel.

We find here that **he reigned for twelve years and was the worst king that Israel had ever had up to this point! That is until his son, Ahab, took the throne after his death** and wound up being even more wicked than his father!

This passage gives us some of the background of King Ahab. We are going to find in our studies yet to come that **King Ahab is one of the key players throughout the rest of the book of 1 Kings.**

First, let's take a look at his father Omri and then we'll look at him and his famous wife, Jezebel, as Israel continues her journey in a downward spiral of sin!

I. WE SEE THE ROOTS OF SAMARIA! (16:22-24)

After Omri became king, six years into his reign, he moved the capital from Tirzah to Samaria. Samaria served as the capital on the northern kingdom until the fall of the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

Omri paid Shemer two talents of silver (150 lbs.) for the city. So, the city was his personally. He had control of it. Samaria was built upon a hill and was almost impregnable because of its elevated position on a 300 foot hill. It was a strategic location near a busy trade route.

However, Omri died before completing the city. So, his son, Ahab finished the construction. Ahab constructed an ivory palace and temple dedicated to Baal worship. Samaria was Israel's crown of pride!

We will see later that the northern kingdom was eventually called Samaria (**1 Kings 21:1**). Omri thought he was buying ground for a town. Little did he know the impact of his decisions upon future events. **Little do we understand how our present decisions affect future events too. May God help us to make the right decisions and do his will so that we leave behind a GODLY legacy!**

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Omri left and ungodly legacy and Ahab picks up right where his dear old dad left off!

We know Samaria has an important place in Bible history. When we look into the future, (**John 4**) we find the story of the Lord Jesus Christ intentionally going through the city of Samaria to witness to a woman at the well in Samaria and then He witnessed to her friends and family that she brought to Him!

He taught us that He is the source of living water—the source of spiritual life that alone can truly satisfy!

John 4:14—But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

He taught us about God and our worship of Him!

John 4:24—God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

He taught us about outreach and the need to be involved in the harvest of souls of souls!

John 4:35—Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

We also find that when Jesus told a certain Jewish lawyer to love his neighbor as himself, the lawyer asked Jesus the question, **“And who is my neighbor?”** Jesus answered Him by telling **the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37**, which basically answered the question with, **“Who needs you to be a neighbor?”**

So, Jesus used these two instances about Samaria—one real and the other a parable to teach us some very important truths!

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II. WE SEE THE SUMMARY OF THE WICKED REIGN OF OMRI! (16:25-28)

As we've said, Omri was the worst of all the kings we've seen up to this point. He was worse than Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri. However, the absolute worst was still yet to come. Omri's sinfulness provoked God to anger. Provoking God to anger is NEVER a good thing!

Does God still get angry? Yes! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What makes the Lord angry?

1. **Unbelief.** (e.g. Israel in the wilderness.)
Psalm 78:21-22—Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:
2. **Disobedience.** (e.g. In the matter of Achan.)
Joshua 7:11—Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff
3. **Idolatry.** (e.g. Solomon toward the end of his reign)
4. **Not following God's directions in his Word.**
2 Samuel 6:7—And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.
5. **Not following the Lord's will.**
Numbers 32:10-11—And the Lord's anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:

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These things still anger the Lord. For these reasons, judgment is going to come one day on the entire world. When the Lord comes to take His children home in the Rapture, then He will pour out His wrath on this world in the Tribulation Period and then there is a place called Hell for unbelievers who die without Jesus Christ as their Savior.

III. WE SEE THE SUMMARY OF THE WICKED REIGN OF AHAB! (16:29-30)

For the next 22 years, Ahab will rule over Israel. He will do more evil than all of those before him. So Israel continues in this downward spiral into the depths of sin. It is the same spiral that Paul mentioned in *Romans 1:18-32*.

That is the nature of sin. Sin continually spirals downward because it is never satisfied for long. Ahab uses his influence to continue to promote idolatry in the northern kingdom of Israel.

IV. WE SEE AHAB TAKE THIS WICKEDNESS A STEP FURTHER! (16:31)

Ahab considered it **trivial or a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam**. That is the effect that sinful habits can have upon a person or a nation. **Sin hardens and numbs a person. It can cause a person to become apathetic toward evil.**

Paul described this condition as having a seared conscience!
1 Timothy 4:2—Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

With a numbed conscience, a person will continue in the downward spiral of sin! There used to be a time when folks in our nation used to be shocked at things that are prolific in our days—nudity, adultery, sodomy, filthy language, murder of the unborn.

In our day these things are becoming socially acceptable in our nation and folks are getting increasingly numb to it.

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Many things that used to be looked down on are becoming increasingly accepted, embraced, and even promoted in our dear country!

Ahab scorned God's Word. The Scriptures forbade marriage with the heathen (*Deuteronomy 7:2-3*). Yet, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. Who were these folks? Ethbaal means “*man of Baal*” or “*Baal is with him.*” He was a priest of Tyre. He assassinated the Tyrian king and took the throne. He worshiped the sun god, Baal. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal and was a terrible influence upon Ahab. She was a very wicked woman.

1 Kings 21:25—“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”

The land was ruled by Ahab and HE was ruled by Jezebel. Jezebel made Samaria the center of Baal worship. She had the prophets of God slaughtered. Further down the road of the future, Ahab and Jezebel have a daughter, Athaliah, who ends up marrying Jehoram, the king of Judah.

Through a series of events and deaths, Athaliah seizes the throne, destroys all the royal descendants of Judah except for one boy, who was hidden from danger, Joash. If she could have been successful, she would have destroyed the line of Jesus Christ.

Listen, it really does matter who you choose as a mate in marriage!

V. WE SEE AHAB’S PROMOTION OF BAAL WORSHIP!
(16:32-33)

Ahab promoted this idol worship in Israel. More altars, temples, and groves are constructed for pagan worship. Wickedness got an even stronger foothold in Israel. These events are a reminder of the pattern of evil.

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Evil seeks to be allowed and permitted on a basis of tolerance, freedom of expression, rights, and equal time.

We previously saw how evil was promoted and tolerated with the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. (*Cf. 1 Kings 12:28*)

Once evil gets a foothold, you can count on it changing its tune about tolerance, equal time, and rights.

Evil will then become **intolerant** and competitors will be whipped into submission. Toleration is replaced with totalitarianism. Just look at the events of our day and the days leading up to our day.

In China, Communism started with tolerance. The communist wanted tolerance and equal time. Once in power, the communist ended tolerance and killed any protestors or imprisoned them.

Consider evolution. When Creation was taught, evolutionist wanted tolerance and an equal voice. Now that it is dominant in the schools, Creation is not tolerated in many schools.

Consider sex education in the schools. Abstinence was replaced with so-called “*safe sex.*” Now abstinence is forbidden to be taught in many school systems.

Homosexuals cried out for tolerance for years, then equal rights, and now they demand special rights and protections. If they get into power, they will persecute and oppress those who differ from them with a cruel viciousness. We’ve got one running for president!

Already opponents to homosexuality are being harassed and intimidated by lawsuits, demonstrations, and being labeled as unloving or homophobes. In Canada, protestors to homosexuality and preachers against it are already being imprisoned.

Worldliness and wickedness crept into Israel and destroyed the nation.

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It went in that downward spiral of sin and the more they went in the downward spiral of sin, the more bondage they were in to sin.

Today, many Churches are becoming more like the world in order to relate to the world. Many have softened their message while **entertainment has become more important than exhortation.**

Apostasy is on the rise, just as the Apostles prophesied would be the case for the last days!

1 Timothy 4:1-2 1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

It's happening! Don't allow yourself to be caught up in it!

Paul said in *Romans 12:2—And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

James 4:4—Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

VI. WE SEE THE REALIZATION OF GOD'S WORD! (16:34)

People became so ignorant of the Word of God or they developed such a defiance to it, that we see the city of Jericho was rebuilt in spite of the curse pronounced upon its rebuilding.

Joshua 6:26—And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.

This curse was pronounced about 500 years earlier.

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All knowledge or respect for the Word was gone because Israel had gone in the downward spiral of sin. Hiel didn't care about that curse and was determined to do what he wanted to do no matter what.

But God's Word was fulfilled! Hiel laid the foundation at the cost of his firstborn son, Abiram, and the gates of the city at the cost of Segub. You do not defy God's Word and get away with it. His Word comes to pass.

When one's life on the downward spiral of sin, they had best repent and get the LORD's help to get off of it!