

Lesson 2

September 13, 2026

Kings of the Kingdom of Israel:

Ungodly rulers influence people to sin.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson examines Israel's spiritual decline under three kings, illustrating the terrible impact of idolatry and unfaithfulness. King Jeroboam, fearing for his reign, introduced idolatry to secure his grip on power, steering the nation away from God and into moral failure. King Ahab deepened this corruption, emerging as Israel's most wicked ruler by promoting Baal and Asherah worship, resulting in severe divine judgment. In contrast, King Jehu acted as God's agent of justice, eradicating Baal worship and restoring God's authority. These events demonstrate the importance of steadfast faithfulness to God and the dire cost of turning away.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jeroboam introduced idolatry to consolidate his rule and prevent his people from worshipping in Jerusalem. He established golden calves in Bethel and Dan, thus leading the nation into spiritual decline. This idolatrous foundation set a precedent for subsequent rulers, culminating in the infamous reign of King Ahab. Under the influence of his Phoenician wife Jezebel, Ahab established the worship of Baal and Asherah, erecting altars and temples for these foreign deities among God's people. This period marked a significant departure from the worship of Yahweh, resulting in prophetic opposition, particularly from Elijah, who condemned the nation's apostasy.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. KING JEROBOAM INSTITUTES IDOLARY: 1 Kings 12:25-33.**
 - A. Jeroboam's Fear and Strategic Decisions, (25-29)
 - B. Establishment of Idolatrous Worship, (30-33)
- 2. AHAB: ISRAEL'S WORST KING: 1 Kings 16:29-33; 21:17-26.**
 - A. Ahab's Reign and Idolatry, (16:29-33)
 - B. Ahab's Wickedness and Judgment, (21:17-26)
- 3. KING JEHU: GOD'S AVENGER: 2 Kings 9:1-10; 10:11, 20-28.**
 - A. Jehu's Anointing and Mission, (9:1-10)
 - B. Jehu's Zealous Execution of Justice, (10:11, 20-28)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. KING JEROBOAM INSTITUTES IDOLATRY: 1 Kings 12:25-33.

A. Jeroboam's Fear and Strategic Decisions, 1 Kings 12:25-29.

Jeroboam, the first leader of the Northern Kingdom, made ill-advised decisions to secure his throne. Concerned that Israelites traveling to Jerusalem to worship and sacrifice at the Temple might rekindle their allegiance to Rehoboam, king of Judah, Jeroboam took decisive yet misguided action (vv. 26-27). In his anxiety to safeguard his kingdom, he constructed two golden calves and established alternative worship sites in Bethel and Dan (vv. 28-29). Declaring these idols as the gods who delivered Israel from Egypt, Jeroboam deviated Israel from God's commands. His choices show how fear can compel individuals to compromise their faith and principles by prioritizing political or personal stability over obedience to God.

Jeroboam's story illustrates a powerful lesson about valuing divine guidance over fear-driven choices. His anxiety over losing control led him to rely on human strategies, triggering spiritual decline and idolatry in Israel. This account reminds modern leaders of the risks of letting fear dictate decisions instead of seeking divine wisdom. Authentic Christian leadership acknowledges God's sovereignty and makes decisions aligned with His will, even in the face of uncertainty. Jeroboam's action challenges us to reflect on whether our choices stem from fear of faith and encourage us to trust in God's plan. Choosing faith over fear enables leaders and individuals to act in harmony with divine purposes, fostering growth and alignment with God's greater intentions.

B. Establishment of Idolatrous Worship, 1 Kings 12:30-33.

Trying to prevent the people of the northern tribes from worshipping in Jerusalem, Jeroboam formulated an alternative strategy that was not acceptable to God. He erected worship centers in Bethel and Dan, where he presented two golden calves to the people, claiming they were the gods who had delivered them from Egypt. "And this thing became a sin" (v. 30). The Israelites had left a land (Egypt) where calves were worshipped as gods, and now Jeroboam proposed worshipping golden calves, an act based on an outrageous lie. This blatant act of idolatry defied God's command and led the Israelites away from true worship. The actions of the desperate king reveal the perils of placing power and convenience above obedience to God's Word or God's will. Such worship did not result in God's blessings, but rather in His judgment.

Jeroboam also disregarded the ordained structure of worship established by God in the Law of Moses. He appointed his own priesthood, replacing the rightful Levitical priests. In addition, he introduced unauthorized festivals of his own design. In short, he was creating a false religion and then trying to employ the name of God to validate it. These measures further alienated the Northern Kingdom from the covenantal worship instituted by God. Jeroboam's choices had lasting consequences, putting Israel in a cycle of idolatry that culminated in their eventual destruction and exile. His actions demonstrate the spiritual consequences of compromising God's commands for personal or political advantage.

Jeroboam's story serves as a sober reminder to leaders and individuals that loyalty to God's Word should never be compromised for personal interests, innovation, or ease. Authentic worship and devotion demand faithfulness to God's principles, untainted by human ambition or

selfish goals. Jeroboam's choices remind us of the critical importance of integrity and dependence on divine guidance when making decisions that affect other's lives, both materially and spiritually. Fear-driven actions may yield short-term gains, but they often come at the expense of long-term faithfulness.

When Jeroboam became the king over ten tribes of Israel, the Lord promised him, "If you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you" (1 Kings 11:38 NKJV).

Tragically, Jeroboam failed to trust in the Lord, leading to his eventual demise. If we want to have an "enduring house," we must walk in the Lord's ways.

2. AHAB: ISRAEL'S WORST KING: 1 Kings 16:29-33; 21:17-26.

A. Ahab's Reign and Idolatry, 1 Kings 16:29-33.

In this passage, the reign of Ahab, the son of Omri, is introduced as a period marked by significant moral and spiritual decline in Israel. Ahab ascended to the throne of Israel and reigned for twenty-two years in Samaria. However, he is described as doing "more evil" (v. 30 NIV) than all the kings who preceded him. Ahab not only continued in the sinful practices of Jeroboam, who had led Israel into idolatry by creating golden calves, but Ahab compounded this apostasy by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Through this union, Ahab further entrenched idolatry in Israel by introducing and promoting the worship of Baal, a Canaanite deity. He built an altar for Baal in Samaria and erected an Asherah pole, provoking the Lord to anger more than any king before him (v. 33).

By prioritizing political alliances and cultural assimilation over faithfulness to God, Ahab led Israel into deeper spiritual corruption. His actions illustrate how leadership can profoundly influence a nation's moral direction, either toward righteousness or rebellion against God. As Proverbs 14:34 states, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Ahab's choices not only dishonored God but also set a destructive precedence for Israel, reminding us of the critical need for leaders who uphold godly principles and resist the temptation to conform to worldly influences.

B. Ahab's Wickedness and Judgment, 1 Kings 21:17-26.

Ahab's wickedness was further unveiled through the unjust seizure of Naboth's vineyard. Consumed by greed and covetousness, Ahab passively allowed Jezebel, his wife, to arrange Naboth's death through false charges and an unlawful execution. This shameless act demonstrated Ahab's moral corruption, illustrating his readiness to abandon responsibility and condone cruelty for selfish gain. Ahab's actions highlight the dangerous implications of unchecked authority and the perils of trusting in wicked influences.

Eventually, however, God sent the prophet Elijah to pronounce judgment on Ahab, (vv. 17-19). When they met, Elijah told the king, "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord" (v. 20). Elijah said destruction would fall on Ahab's family lineage and Jezebel would meet a horrific end: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel" (v. 23). The couple may have

thought they had gotten away with murder and theft, but God sees and knows all, and He does not turn a blind eye to evil behavior.

We should never see God's patience and mercy as indifference or approval. The time God allows for repentance does not mean He is ignorant of or indifferent to sin. Ahab's dynasty was doomed to suffer the same fate as Jeroboam and Baasha, former rulers who also led Israel into disobedience. God's justice is both unerring and unavoidable for those who continue to defy His will. Furthermore, it offers a compelling message of accountability, calling rulers and individuals alike to act with integrity and uphold justice as they pursue the path of righteousness.

Being the king of Israel was not enough for Ahab. When he wanted a common man's vineyard, he schemed to steal it. Unless God fills the void in our hearts, we will always be searching for something to fill it. Thomas Brooks said, "You may as soon fill a bag with wisdom, a chest with virtue, or a circle with a triangle, as the heart of man with anything here below. A man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him."

3. KING JEHU: GOD'S AVENGER: 2 Kings 9:1-10; 10:11, 20-28.

A. Jehu's Anointing and Mission, 2 Kings 9:1-10.

In these verses, we witness a critical moment in Israel's history as the prophet Elisha, following God's command, sent one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu as king over Israel. This anointing was not merely a political act but a divine commission. The young prophet was instructed to take a flask of oil, find Jehu among his companions, and anoint him in private, symbolizing God's selection and empowerment for a specific mission. This act demonstrated God's sovereignty in raising leaders according to His purposes. Jehu's anointing signified a divine mandate to bring judgment upon the house of Ahab for their idolatry and bloodshed, particularly in relation to the innocent blood shed by Jezebel. The anointing also illustrated the importance of obedience and courage in fulfilling God's calling, as Jehu was tasked with a challenging mission that required unwavering faith and determination.

Jehu's mission was both judicial and redemptive. He was charged with eradicating the influence of Ahab's dynasty and the worship of Baal, which had led Israel into spiritual corruption. The prophetic word delivered to Jehu emphasized that God's justice would prevail, fulfilling earlier prophecies about the downfall of Ahab's house. This reminds us of God's faithfulness to His word and His intolerance of sin and idolatry. Jehu's anointing and mission serve as a powerful example of how God raises leaders to execute His will and restore righteousness among His people. It also challenges us to reflect on our own willingness to respond to God's call with boldness and dedication, trusting in His guidance and provision as we carry out the tasks He has entrusted to us.

B. Jehu's Zealous Execution of Justice, 2 Kings 10:11, 20-28.

In verse 11, we see Jehu's commitment to executing God's judgment as he eliminated all remaining members of Ahab's house in Jezreel, along with his officials, close associates, and priests. This act was not driven by personal vendetta but by a divine mandate to purge Israel of

the idolatry and corruption introduced by Ahab and Jezebel. Jehu's actions demonstrate the seriousness with which God views sin and the lengths to which He will go to uphold His righteousness. While the severity of Jehu's actions may seem harsh, it is a sobering reminder of the consequences of turning away from God's commandments and the importance of aligning leadership with His will.

In verses 20-28, Jehu continued his zealous mission by orchestrating the destruction of Baal worship in Israel. He gathered all the worshippers of Baal under the pretense of holding a great sacrifice only to have them executed and the temple of Baal destroyed. This decisive act eradicated a major source of spiritual corruption and reaffirmed the worship owed to the Lord alone. Jehu's actions demonstrated the necessity of complete devotion to God and the courage required to confront widespread sin. However, Jehu's story also warns us to ensure that our zeal for justice is accompanied by personal faithfulness, as his later compromises (v. 31) reveal the need for both righteous action and continuing obedience to God.

The account of Jehu shows us that God has a special plan for each of us and provides us with what we need to accomplish it, even when it feels scary or uncertain. Jehu's anointing wasn't just about becoming a leader; it was about completing God's mission to bring justice and righteousness to a broken, corrupt nation. Jehu's bravery and obedience encourage us to follow our own callings with faith, trusting God to guide and support us. His story also reminds us to check our actions and stay devoted to God. Ultimately, God can use any willing vessel to accomplish amazing things.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

As followers of Jesus, we must always keep our eyes on Him. He is the one who leads us on the right paths for the right reasons. One glance away, and we may be headed down the wrong road.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

All leadership should be accountable. We are accountable to God first, but also to one another. Leadership without accountability is prone to excess and self-aggrandizement, which are wrong.

Kings Before Israel Had a King

The first king mentioned in the Bible is Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-12). While Nimrod is not called a king by the Bible, he is called a king by historians because the Bible tells of the vast kingdom of cities in Mesopotamia (the first cities of the Babylonian and Assyrian Empires) over which he ruled (about 2300 BC).

Nimrod “was a mighty hunter before the Lord” (Genesis 10:9). This seems to relate him in some way to Yahweh, the God of Israel, before Israel existed. The opinion in ancient Jewish commentary is that Nimrod was a rebel against God and “a mighty hunter” of men by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. Commentators today are content to say we know very little about Nimrod, except that “he was a hunter, ruler, and builder.”

The next mention of kings in the Bible is in Genesis 14. This chapter tells of four kings from Mesopotamia who came and made war against five kings in Canaan (vv. 8-9), and defeated them, taking away many captives, including Lot, Abraham’s nephew (v. 11-12). Abraham, with a small army of 318 men, pursued the Asian kings and brought back unharmed all the captives they had taken (v. 16).

Also included in the story in Genesis 14 is the account of the interaction between Abraham and Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem), to whom Abraham paid tithes (vv. 18-20; see Hebrews 7:1-3).

Next, the Bible tells of the eight kings of the Edomites, who reigned as kings over cities before Israel had a king (Genesis 36:31-39). The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the older twin brother of Jacob (see Genesis 25:19-28). The city-kingdoms of the Edomites were located southeast of the Dead Sea.

According to the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament, the man Job (in the Book of Job) was an Edomite king. Being a descendant of Esau, who was the grandson of Abraham, Job “was the fifth son from Abraham,” who ruled as king over the city called Dennaba. He “was Jobab [see Genesis 36:33], who is call Job” (Job 42:20-21; The Orthodox Study Bible, SAAS).

WORKSHEET

The Law of the Lid

Motivational Christian speaker John Maxwell talks about “The Law of the Lid.” This principle says nothing will rise higher than the standards(s) of the leader. As is often stated, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”

The name Jeroboam means “a large bottle.”

- In 1 Kings 11:37-38, which large opportunity did God give to him?
- How did Jeroboam miserably fail (12:28-32)?

The name Ahab means “beloved” (1 Kings 16:30).

- Rather than living up to his name, what did Ahab bring upon his own two sons (vv. 32-34)?
- With whom did Ahab become an “enemy,” and why (21:20)?

What does Proverbs 28:2 state about the significance of leaders?

- How have you witnessed the truth of this proverb?