

Life Lesson 78
Wicked Kings and a Faithful God
Text I Kings 16

Introduction

Prince Abijah, Jeroboam's son, loved God. The prophet Ahaziah said that he alone would have an honorable burial and be mourned by his people. Because Jeroboam had turned against God, he had a terrible death in store for him. He wouldn't be mourned and the dogs would lick his blood. Jeroboam must have lain awake at night thinking about the horrible ways he might die in a way that dogs would be able to do that!

The Story

As always, it happened just as God had said. Jeroboam died in battle while he was riding in his chariot. The servants took the chariot to a lake to clean it up after the battle, and the dogs licked up the blood from the water as it was being cleaned. That's gross, but it shows that when God says something will happen -- it happens!

After King Jeroboam died, his son Nadab became the new king. He was even more wicked than his father! He reigned only two years before the prophecy of God was fulfilled. Baasha led a revolt against him and killed him.

Baasha wasn't any better than the house of Jeroboam had been. He, too, worshiped idols and did evil things. He killed all the relatives of Jeroboam. They all died shameful deaths and didn't have decent burials, just as God had said.

Baasha ruled for 24 years after he had murdered King Nadab. After Baasha died, his son Elah came to the throne. He was even worse than his father. He only reigned two years. He was having a drunken party when Zimri, the captain of his chariots, sneaked in and killed him.

Zimri paid for that evil deed. He only sat on the throne for a week before Omri came and captured the city of Tirzah where Zimri was ruling. When Zimri saw that Omri had defeated him, he went in to the king's palace and set it on fire. He burned to death.

Omri followed Jeroboam and the other wicked kings of Israel. He too, worshiped idols and allowed wickedness in the land. He reigned for 12 years.

What a series of wicked kings! Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri all led God'[s people astray. After Omri died, his son Ahab became the King of Israel. The other kings were terrible, but Ahab was the worst! His wife Jezebel encouraged him in his wickedness.

The worst thing he did was to worship Baal. He built a temple to that horrible false god and encouraged his people to worship there. He even persecuted the people who still loved and obeyed the true God. Many of the priests had to hide to escape from wicked Ahab.

The Bible says that Ahab did more to anger God than any of the other kings. When we think of those horribly wicked kings that came before him, we can know what an evil man Ahab must have been. Do you think God let Ahab get by with his wickedness? No, the other kings were punished and so was Ahab. God sent the prophet Elijah to warn him.

"As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand," Elijah said to Ahab, "There will be no more rain or dew on the ground until I say."

Do you think it took courage to say that to a king? Yet, Elijah was obeying God, so God took care of him. He helped him to escape. Before long there wasn't much food or water in the land. The lakes and streams and wells dried up because there was no rain to replenish them. No crops could grow because the rain they needed didn't fall. No grass grew, so the animals starved to death. Before long, the people were starving and dying of thirst.

God didn't forget Elijah. He led him to a brook that hadn't yet dried up so he had water to drink. There was no food anywhere around, though. How could he survive? It was impossible -- but impossible is no problem to God. Big black birds appeared in the sky. They swooped down and landed near Elijah. Maybe he thought at first that they were buzzards coming to look for a meal -- but instead they were ravens. They came bringing him food! I don't know where they got it or what it was, but Elijah didn't care. He was able to stay alive while he was hiding from wicked Ahab.

At last, though, it was time for Elijah to move on, so God let the brook dry up. Elijah went to the city of Zarephath. There God led him to a poor widow.

“Would you give me something to eat?” he asked her.

“All I have is a little meal and little oil,” she answered. “I’m going to gather two sticks and make a fire and make a little pancake for my son and myself. Then we will have to starve. I will share what I have with you, though.”

“If you will make me a pancake first, God will see to it that you have enough for you and your son,” Elijah said.

The woman believed him -- and believed God. She scraped out the meal from the bottom of the barrel and poured out the last of the oil. She made a cake for Elijah. Then she went back and found she could scrape enough meal up and pour out enough oil for a meal for her little family. Every day the same thing happened. She fed the prophet and found that there was enough for her son and for her, too. As long as the famine lasted, the barrel didn't run out of meal and the bottle kept pouring out oil. That's impossible -- but impossible things aren't hard for God!

The Life Lesson

God took care of Elijah when there was little food and water. Do you think He will take care of your needs? Yes, He will. God never abandons His children. If you obey and give, will you have to worry about doing without? God blessed the widow of Zarephath, and He will bless you when you give -- especially when you don't see how your needs will be supplied.

What do you think happened to those wicked people who worshiped Baal? Did Baal take care of them? No, they were the ones who died of hunger and thirst. Over and over we see in these stories that God will not put up with sin. Wicked people think they will get by with worshiping other gods, but God always has judgment in store for them.

Review Questions

What prophecy about Jeroboam came true?

He would die and the dogs would lick his blood.

Who became king next?

Jeroboam's son Nadab

Name some wicked kings in the early days of Israel.

Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab

Who was the wickedest king of all?

Ahab

Who was Ahab's wicked wife?

Jezebel

What was the worst thing Ahab did?

He built a temple to Baal and persecuted the people who served the true God.

What prophet did God send to warn Ahab to stop his evil ways?

Elijah

Did Ahab listen to Elijah?

No

What did God do to Ahab and the Israelites who were serving other Baal?

He stopped the rain from coming so everything dried up. There was no food or water.

How did God provide for Elijah?

He had water from a brook and birds brought him food.

How did God provide for Elijah when the brook dried up?

A widow in Zarephath shared her food with him.

What miracle did God do for the widow and for Elijah?

The barrel of meal and the bottle of oil were almost empty -- but God made them keep giving just enough meal and oil for the daily meal.