

The Reigns of the Last Kings of Israel

Lesson Scope: [2 Kings 15:8-31](#)

Lesson Focus

The Northern Kingdom's brief period of prosperity before its fall, sometimes called the Indian Summer of Israel, basically ended with the death of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25).

The nation at this time was steeped in idolatry and immorality, while still hypocritically observing sacrifices and sacred feasts. Oppression, bloodshed, and greed characterized the people in general. The rich tended to grow richer and the poor progressively poorer. The kings in this lesson reflected these national conditions.

While Israel was rapidly losing power under the six kings in this lesson, Assyrian power was rising. Through Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, God denounced Israel's sin and warned of impending doom. In spite of these warnings, however, the nation rushed headlong toward captivity and destruction.

Sin defiles individuals and destroys the moral fiber of societies. Those who continue to do evil in the sight of the Lord incur divine judgment.

This lesson is a negative lesson about the evils of people who professed to be God's people. Even though this lesson seems to focus on sin and destruction, remember that God continued to call these people and that the difficulties they faced were intended to bring them to repentance.

Lesson Aim: To see traits of those who are ripe for judgment.

Theme Verse: [Proverbs 29:1](#). He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Lesson Text

Zachariah and Shallum

[2 Kings 15:8-13](#) ⁸ In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. ⁹ And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as

his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ¹⁰ And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. ¹¹ And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹² This *was* the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth *generation*. And so it came to pass. ¹³ Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

Menahem and Pekahiah

2 Kings 15:14-24 ¹⁴ For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. ¹⁵ And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹⁶ Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that *were* therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not *to him*, therefore he smote *it*; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up. ¹⁷ In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and *reigned* ten years in Samaria. ¹⁸ And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ¹⁹ And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. ²⁰ And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, *even* of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land. ²¹ And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? ²² And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead. ²³ In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and *reigned* two years. ²⁴ And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Pekah and Hoshea

2 Kings 15:25-30 ²⁵ But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room. ²⁶ And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ²⁷ In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* twenty years. ²⁸ And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ²⁹ In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. ³⁰ And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

Questions for Study

Zachariah and Shallum

1. What lesson does 2 Kings 15:12 teach?
2. What did God promise Israel at this time? (See Hosea 13 and 14.) What does He promise sinners today?
3. How can we promote the moral integrity of our posterity?

Menahem and Pekahiah

4. Since God granted Menahem a longer reign than the two preceding kings, can we conclude that he was more righteous than they? Why or why not?
5. Why is taking human life such a serious offense to God?
6. In our day, what actions give evidence of failure to trust God?

Pekah and Hoshea

7. What consequences did these kings face for continuing to follow the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat?
8. How should Christians relate to the mistakes and failures of previous generations?

Analyzing the Passage

It seems that Jeroboam and the kings who followed him viewed worship of the golden calves as worship to God. They saw this as an alternative worship practice, but God called it sin. The sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat was that of making images and bowing to them. The seriousness of his sin multiplied when he commanded his people to follow him in idolatry.

The Lord spoke through the prophet Amos, saying, "And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (Amos 7:9). The Lord would end the calf worship in Israel and punish the idolaters. His judgment would begin with the royal family. As a result, Zachariah reigned only six months.

God's promise to Jehu for destroying the house of Ahab (2 Kings 15:12) was that his seed would reign for four generations (see 2 Kings 10:30). Zachariah was the fourth, and his short reign fulfilled this promise. The ungodly lives of Jehu and his posterity brought a bitter end to their reign.

According to 2 Kings 15:10, Shallum slew Zachariah before the people; that suggests that he had the support of the people. He soon met the same end, however, reaping what he had sown.

Principles and Applications

Zachariah and Shallum

1. Corrupt worship brings divine judgment (2 Kings 15:9, 18, 24). Men tend to invent methods of worship that gratify the fallen nature. Worship that does not require obedience or surrendering self is a mockery. Fervent prayers or beautiful expressions of adoration for God on Sunday mean little if we do not live for Him the rest of the week. True worship to God involves all of life.

2. Following the downward course of previous generations prepares people for judgment (2 Kings 15:8-9). Family influence can be quite strong, and the prejudices and errors that one grows up with are very difficult to shake off. That is never a legitimate excuse for continuing such a course, however. God still holds people accountable for the truth they know and the truth they had opportunity to know.

3. Those who shamelessly do evil are ripe for judgment (2 Kings

15:10). Doing evil openly goes a step beyond doing evil secretly. It reveals a spirit of defiance and contempt typical of those who are hardened in sin. When people are at this point, God's warnings hardly cause them to pause in their wicked way. Very few such people ever seek the Lord.

Menahem and Pekahiah

4. Those who disregard the sanctity of human life are ripe for judgment (2 Kings 15:10-16, 25, 30). God commanded Jehu to destroy the family of Ahab in retribution for their wickedness. Later He brought judgment on Jehu's family for the innocent blood they had shed in Jezreel (Hosea 1:4). Jesus said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). We know that God brings judgment on the murderer, but do we consider that hatred between brethren is just as serious in God's sight (1 John 3:15)?

5. Those who persist in selfish ambitions are in line for judgment (2 Kings 15:16, 19-20). Menahem's giving tribute money to Pul so that Menahem's kingdom could be established seems self-serving. He did this at the expense of his own people. Taking advantage of others for personal gain is unjust and uncalled-for in any case. Christ calls us to serve the needs of others with a caring and humble spirit.

Pekah and Hoshea

6. Bold disrespect for authority characterizes those who are ripe for judgment (2 Kings 15:25). God is to be revered and respected along with the authorities that He has set up, even when those men abuse their authority. When they require what God forbids, the child of God respectfully refuses to obey so that he can fulfill God's higher law. Bold defiance of authority, for whatever reason, expresses pride and invites God's wrath.

7. A mob spirit often characterizes those on the downward course of sin (2 Kings 15:25). The bigger the crowd of those who agree, the easier it is to quiet one's conscience and justify a wrong course. The presence of others may give reassurance or even incite boldness, but it never changes God's standard of right and wrong. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21).

8. Those who are ripe for judgment blindly continue headlong on their

course to destruction (2 Kings 15:29-30). God is faithfully using road-blocks, trials, and the still, small voice to bring men back to Himself. If men insist on going their own way, God allows them to do so; but they cannot avoid the consequences. "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

Important Teachings

1. Corrupt worship brings divine judgment (2 Kings 15:9, 18, 24).
2. Following the downward course of previous generations prepares people for judgment (2 Kings 15:8-9).
3. Those who shamelessly do evil are ripe for judgment (2 Kings 15:10).
4. Those who disregard the sanctity of human life are ripe for judgment (2 Kings 15:10, 14-16, 25, 30).
5. Those who persist in selfish ambitions are in line for judgment (2 Kings 15:16, 19-20).
6. Bold disrespect for authority characterizes those who are ripe for judgment (2 Kings 15:25).
7. A mob spirit often characterizes those on the downward course of sin (2 Kings 15:25).
8. Those who are ripe for judgment blindly continue headlong on their course to destruction (2 Kings 15:29-30).

Answers to Questions

1. What lesson does 2 Kings 15:12 teach?

God kept His promise to Jehu even though he and his posterity proved unfaithful. Sometimes we would like to excuse ourselves from keeping a promise because of how someone else has acted. God keeps His promises, and He expects us to do the same.

2. What did God promise Israel at this time? (See Hosea 13 and 14.)
What does He promise sinners today?

God promised that if Israel would return to God, He would take away their iniquity, heal their backsliding, and love them freely.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

3. How can we promote the moral integrity of our posterity?

God holds us responsible to set a consistent, godly example for our children. Their formative years give us opportunity to instill in them obedience and godly fear through loving discipline. We must guard carefully the influences and associates to which they are exposed. We should be diligent and should persevere in fervent prayer.

4. Since God granted Menahem a longer reign than the two preceding kings, can we conclude that he was more righteous than they? Why or why not?

No. We do not always know why God chooses to extend mercy longer to some than to others. We do know that unless man surrenders to God, his opportunity to receive mercy will someday be over. It is presumptuous to assume that because judgment is not executed speedily, a person is righteous.

5. Why is taking human life such a serious offense to God?

God created man in His own image; He reserves the right to end human life (Genesis 9:6). Numbers 35:33 tells us that shedding blood pollutes the land. Abortion, euthanasia, and murder pollute a nation and make it ripe for judgment. Death seals the destiny of an eternal soul; we should be careful to avoid accidentally sealing someone's doom.

6. In our day, what actions give evidence of failure to trust God?

Retaliating against wrongs done to us shows that we are unwilling to let God make disposition of the matter. Worry is Satan's substitute for trust. We might take out insurance to secure us against loss.

7. What consequences did these kings face for continuing to follow the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

They faced the judgment of God, captivity, and death. This judgment could have been avoided if they had turned to God.

8. How should Christians relate to the mistakes and failures of previous generations?

No generation is completely free of weakness and failure. If our parents failed, that does not give us excuse to defend or repeat their mistakes; rather, we should learn from their failures and do better in our generation. Neither should we reflect unduly against our forebears. Perhaps they did the best they could in light of their understanding and upbringing.

Summarizing the Lesson

God's desire for Israel was that they return. He did not delight in destroying them, but He would not have been just to let the wicked go unpunished. God tailors the difficulties, the chastisement, the acts of mercy, and the pleading of the conscience to draw men to Himself. He is faithful, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Stop, poor sinners, stop and think,
 Before you farther go;
 Will you sport upon the brink
 Of everlasting woe?
 On the verge of ruin stop
 Now the friendly warning take;
 Stay your footsteps ere you drop
 Into the burning lake.
 Say, have you an arm like God,
 That you His will oppose?
 Fear you not that iron rod
 With which He breaks His foes?
 Can you stand in that great day,
 Which His justice shall proclaim;
 When the earth shall melt away
 Like wax before the flame.
Though your hearts were made of steel,
 Your foreheads lined with brass,
 God at length will make you feel
 He will not let you pass.
 Sinners then in vain will call,
 Those who now despise His grace,
 "Rocks and mountains on us fall,
 And hide us from His face."
 —John Newton

Research Guide

1. Look up each of the kings in this lesson in a Bible dictionary or a Bible encyclopedia for interesting details and for more inspiration. Look at the meanings of their names, and see how their names fit their characters.
2. Read from the Books of Hosea and Amos for added inspiration.
3. Portions of Isaiah 7, 8, and 9 also deal with this time in Israel's history. Mixed in are a message of hope for the repentant and prophecies of the coming Messiah.
4. Look up "Judgment—The General" in Nave's Topical Bible and see what God says about judgment.