

OpenTheo

October 2nd: 1 Kings 16 & 1 Peter 1:1-21

October 1, 2020



Alastair Roberts

The rise of the Omride dynasty. Our great salvation that the prophets of old sought to understand and the angels look into.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon (https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

1 Kings 16. And the word of the Lord came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Beasha, saying, Since I exalted you out of the dust, and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, behold, I will utterly sweep away Beasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Anyone belonging to Beasha who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat, and any one of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens shall eat.

Now the rest of the acts of Beasha and what he did and his might are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? And Beasha slept with his fathers and was buried at Terzah, and Elah his son reigned in his place. Moreover the word of the Lord came by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani against Beasha and his house both

because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger with the work of his hands in being like the house of Jeroboam and also because he destroyed it. In the 26th year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Beasha began to reign over Israel in Terzah and he reigned two years.

But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. When he was at Terzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arzah, who was over the household in Terzah, Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him in the 27th year of Asa king of Judah and reigned in his place. When he began to reign, as soon as he had seated himself on his throne, he struck down all the house of Beasha.

He did not leave him a single male of his relatives or his friends. Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Beasha according to the word of the Lord which he spoke against Beasha by Jehu the prophet for all the sins of Beasha and the sins of Elah his son which they sinned and which they made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols. Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? In the 27th year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Terzah.

Now the troops were encamped against Gibethon which belonged to the Philistines and the troops who were encamped heard it said, Zimri has conspired and he has killed the king. Therefore all Israel made Amri the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. So Amri went up from Gibethon and all Israel with him and they besieged Terzah.

And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam and for his sin which he committed making Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and the conspiracy that he made, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts. Half of the people followed Tibnai, the son of Gainath to make him king and half followed Amri.

But the people who followed Amri overcame the people who followed Tibnai, the son of Gainath. So Tibnai died and Amri became king. In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Amri began to reign over Israel and he reigned for twelve years.

Six years he reigned in Terzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shema for two talents of silver and he fortified the hill and called the name of the city that he built Samaria after the name of Shema, the owner of the hill. Amri did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did more evil than all who were before him for he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord the God of Israel to anger by their idols.

Now the rest of the acts of Amri that he did and the might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Amri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria and Ahab his son reigned in his place. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Amri began to reign over Israel and Ahab the son of Amri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years and Ahab the son of Amri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him and as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians and went and served Baal and worshipped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria and Ahab made an Asherah.

Ahab did more to provoke the Lord the God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days Hael of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

First Kings chapter 16 covers a period of great unrest in the kingdom of Israel. In less than 20 years Beasher dies, his son Elah takes his place, Elah is killed by Zimri and Beasher's dynasty falls with him. Zimri's reign never gets off the ground.

Amri and Tibnai fight a civil war over the throne with Amnai prevailing. Amri dies and Ahab his son takes his place. The reign of the wicked Amri dynasty will be a defining period for the nation of Israel.

Once again we see the great contrast between the southern dynasty of David and the unrest of the northern kingdom and its dynasties. Over the entire history of Judah and Israel the Word of God stands in judgment. Prophets deliver the Word of God to kings declaring his assessment of their behavior and the fate of their dynasties.

Here it is Jehu the son of Hanani who brings the word of the Lord against Beasher as his father if it is the same Hanani would deliver the word of the Lord to the southern King Asa as we read in 2nd Chronicles chapter 16. Jehu also seems to deliver another prophetic word many years later to Jehoshaphat in 2nd Chronicles chapter 19 verse 2. The similarities between that judgment and the judgment declared upon the house of Beasher are very easy to note. There are other similarities between the two.

Both Jeroboam and Beasher rule for just over 20 years followed by a son who reigns for only a couple of years before that son falls to a conspiracy. Both kings have their entire house wiped out. Indeed the initial fall of both their kingdoms is associated with Gibbethon.

We see this of Nadab the son of Jeroboam in 1st Kings chapter 15 verse 27 and we see it of Elah the son of Beasher in this chapter. We might be forgiven for a pronounced sense of *deja vu*. Israel's history is replaying the same tragic pattern twice in a row.

More generally even though they come from short lines of kings that have killed their predecessor dynasties the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel still take on the character of the first king of their nation Jeroboam the son of Nebat. When people repeat Jeroboam's sins they will receive Jeroboam's punishment. The nation does not abandon the way of Jeroboam even as they kill his sons in the dynasties that succeed them.

Chief among the sins of the northern kingdom is the sin of idolatry. Beasher is judged by the Lord for provoking him to anger by walking in the way of Jeroboam and causing Israel to sin. Indeed he is also judged for his destruction of the house of Jeroboam which might surprise us as he was raised up to fulfill the word of the Lord in bringing about just that destruction.

Now however the same fate that he inflicted on Jeroboam's house is inflicted upon his house. Military commanders had previously been dangerous figures in Israel. Commanders of the army like Abner and Joab had exerted disproportionate power especially during periods when the country was largely at war.

Now it is one of the leading commanders of Elah the son of Beasher, a man who commands half of his chariots who rises up against him possibly with the assistance of Arzah. There seem to be factions in Elah's military as no sooner does Zimri rise up than Amri the commander of the army is elevated by his men. Zimri only reigns for seven days ending up committing a grim suicide by burning himself alive in the house.

Despite his short reign he is still spoken of as continuing in the way of Jeroboam. As Lyssa Rae Beal notes the dynastic line of Israel is not a genealogical line but a line of sin. They all continue in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin.

Israel is divided between Amri and Tibnai for about four years. Amri ends up prevailing. His house becomes the dominant house which as Beal notes becomes synonymous with Israel among the surrounding nations like Assyria even after his dynasty fell.

During Amri's reign he establishes a new capital for the kingdom. He buys the territory of Samaria a strategic defensive hill. Amri's sin exceeds that of his predecessors.

As Peter Lightheart notes Amri is a sort of false David. He is an army commander who fights against the Philistines. He follows a suicidal king and becomes a king after a civil war.

His reign is divided between two capitals. He establishes the new capital of the kingdom. He buys a key tract of land from Shema much as David buys the threshing floor of Ornan for the temple.

His son Ahab is even worse. Ahab comes to the throne of Israel near the end of the reign of Asa in Judah. The reign of Ahab the son of Amri is a watershed.

Ahab exceeds Jeroboam. His reign involves a sort of re-canonization of the land. His wife Jezebel the Sidonian princess spread the worship of the Canaanite deities Baal and Asherah.

In Ahab the northern kingdom reaches its height of wickedness much as the kingdom reached its peak under Solomon. Solomon's foreign wives leading to idolatry are also like Ahab and his marriage to Jezebel. If Amri is a false David then his son Ahab is a false Solomon.

Such similarities invite comparisons. This would be a lesson to Judah and the house of David. They should learn from their twin nation to consider the troubling resemblances between them and the nation to their north and to mend their ways accordingly.

Hiel's rebuilding of Jericho at this time is symptomatic and symbolic of what the reign of Ahab represented. Rebuilding the first Canaanite city to be conquered in the land whose destruction was a testament to the removal of the land from the possession of the idolatrous Canaanites by the Lord is an indication of re-canonization. And centuries on there is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joshua.

In Joshua chapter 6 verse 26 Joshua laid an oath on them at that time saying, At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates. Some have suggested that the two sons were founding or consecrating sacrifices, human sacrifices offered for the sake of the city. A question to consider.

Beasha is judged for destroying Jeroboam's house, the very action that the Lord had raised him up to perform. What lessons about morality and providence might we learn from reflection upon this detail? 1st Peter chapter 1 verses 1 to 21. Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable and defiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice though now for a little while if necessary you have been grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him you love him though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation the prophets

who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look.

Therefore preparing your minds for action and being sober minded set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance but as he who called you is holy you also be holy in all your conduct since it is written you shall be holy for I am holy and if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile knowing that you will ransom from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

1st Peter is the first letter of the leading apostle in the New Testament. Some have doubted that such a letter could have been written by a man of Peter's education and background on account of such things as its strong Greek style. Others have observed many similarities to Paul.

Perhaps it's written with the help of Sylvanus who was associated with Paul he's mentioned in chapter 5 verse 12 the notions that we have of authorship may be rather narrower than those that should apply to a letter such as this. While there is no compelling reason to doubt that it was sent by Peter in his name and with his authority and in accordance with his teaching this need not mean that he composed every single word himself nor needs such a position question that this book was inspired by the Spirit in its entirety. Some have suggested that the book is primarily a catechetical or liturgical document that has been formed into a letter with a lot of fundamental teaching covering the basics for those who have just been baptized for instance.

While no conclusive case has been proved on this front it is a tantalizing possibility. One of the things that it does for instance is suggest that things such as household codes were standard elements of early Christian catechesis. Peter introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

He's once sent as an emissary of the Messiah one who represents his master. It's sent to elect exiles of the dispersion. These people are objects of God's choice.

They're elect even though they may be in exile. In a condition of exile it may seem that God has cut them off but in fact they have been chosen by him and while scattered

abroad in the world are gathered to him by his Spirit. The language of the dispersion was often used by the Jews.

Peter Davids has observed that two to four million Jews lived outside of Palestine and only about a million within it. Much of the Jewish nation then was living in various parts of the Roman Empire. In this letter Peter does not seem to be writing wholly to Jews or even primarily to Jews.

There are a number of statements about their former lives that suggest the recipients were Gentiles. This of course is noteworthy because the church is taking on aspects of Israel's identity. These Christians live in a large area of Asia Minor Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

This region was highly Hellenized. It was cultured and wealthy in its cities and was a context with various mystery cults and traditional Greek religion in addition to the imperial cult. The early Christians to whom Peter is writing were living in that sort of world.

They have been chosen according to the full knowledge of the Father. This is God's eternal purpose, his choice and his providence. The church's existence and its existence in its scattered form is according to God's intent and providence.

It's not an accident. It is not something that we have stumbled into or grasped for ourselves. Behind all of this lies God's settled and effective purpose.

We are elect in the sanctification of the Spirit in addition to the full knowledge of God the Father. We've been set apart as holy, marked out by the Spirit of Christ. We're marked out for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

We're elect for the sake of obedience, chosen to be conformed to his image and to act faithfully in his name. We're elect in order that we might live a new form of life and live to God's glory. We're sprinkled with Christ's blood.

This is the blood of a new covenant, a blood that leads to cleansing and forgiveness of sins and access to God. If we have been paying attention we will have noticed that this is a Trinitarian opening. The full knowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ.

As in the rest of the New Testament there is an implicit Trinitarian structure to the gospel. Peter opens up with a blessing. It is a blessing addressed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is framed and known in the light of Jesus Christ. If we want to get access to God it is through Christ. If we want to know who God is we see who God is in the light of Christ.

Through God's mercy we have been begotten again. We have a radical new beginning, a new beginning that has occurred through the resurrection. This was the decisive event of new birth.

Jesus became the firstborn of the dead and we enter into the new birth when we are united to Christ. The new birth is not primarily a fact about individuals. It's a fact about a new humanity that is being formed in Christ.

The new birth is an event that primarily happened to Christ and we are being joined into it. And all of this has set us apart for a heavenly inheritance that has been preserved for us. It's protected from all sorts of corruption or destruction, from any sort of defilement.

And we are preserved for it. God guards us through faith for the full measure of the salvation that he has in store for us. A salvation that will be revealed finally on the last day.

And recognizing the contours of the situation that Peter has described, we can rejoice even in the midst of trials. These trials are not without purpose. They're there to purify and strengthen our faith, preparing our faith like gold for Christ's glory.

Our faith will be a cause of glory and praise to him. Much as the testing and the proving of Job's faith brought glory to God and matured Job as a son, so the trials that we experience are preparing us for Christ's glory and for fellowship with him. We already love and rejoice in Christ with great joy, even though we have neither seen him in the past nor presently see him.

In all of this we are experiencing a foretaste of a gift of God without measure that we are awaiting in the future. We're having a reality filled promise of what is yet to come. A down payment of what we expect in the future.

This salvation brought by Christ was foretold beforehand. The Old Testament speaks of it and anticipates Christ in many different ways, sometimes through direct prophecy, sometimes through typological prefiguration, sometimes through such things as the words of the Psalms and the two different levels of reference that they can have. All of these scriptures were revealed by the Spirit of God and Peter speaks about the Spirit of Christ speaking in, through and to the prophets and the way that the prophets were trying to discover what was being foretold.

Seeing shadows and silhouettes thrown back by a great light that awaited in the future, they were trying to understand what was going on, what this was all about. They maybe saw the initial fulfillments of the prophecies that they foretold but they could not see that greater fulfillment that was awaiting in the future. What they predicted was not just the glory of Christ but also his sufferings in places such as Isaiah 53 for instance or in Psalm 22 and in some way they realized that these prophecies were not ultimately for

themselves.

They were awaiting some later time when their true meaning would be disclosed and Peter says that that time has come and that the early church is experiencing that. In the message of the gospel announced to them, these secrets that the prophets had been trying to figure out have now been disclosed. Indeed angels themselves try to figure out these things and understand what is going on.

The prophets have tried to figure out these things in the past. In the revelation of the gospel the angels are trying to figure it out, its great mysteries and then Peter challenges us to figure things out. We must prepare our minds for action.

He speaks of girding up loins or perhaps we might think of rolling up sleeves, preparing for action and being sober minded, developing a seriousness and determination in the way that we approach these things. The same energy that the prophets devoted to figuring out these things and the angels devote to these issues we should devote. We should think through these things, try to understand them, try to figure out what it means for us and as a result to set our hope fully on the grace that we are awaiting at the future revelation of Jesus Christ.

Charles Cranfield describes verses 14 to 23 as describing the warp and the woof of Christian life. The warp, the threads that run lengthwise and the woof, the threads that run across. The warp is the nature of the Christian life and the woof is its motives.

The warp is obedience to God, holiness, the fear of God and the love of the brethren and the woof is God's holiness and our belonging to him and the fact that we relate to the judge of all as Father. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and we have been begotten again by the Word of God. He begins by calling us to be obedient children.

We're not to be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance. Obedience involves struggling against our lusts and our passions, the things that once characterized our state. A state that is itself described in terms of ignorance and lack of knowledge, the same ignorance that we should be fighting against as we gird up the loins of our mind and struggle to learn and understand more about God's truth.

Peter takes up an expression that is almost a refrain in the book of Leviticus, be holy as I am holy. We are children of God and we must seek to conform ourselves to the character of our Father. If we call upon God as Father he's the impartial judge of all.

We must have an appropriate sense of fear in calling such a one our Father. We should not be presumptuous. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Peter wants us to have a sense of the weightiness of what it is to approach God and the grace, the sheer measure of the grace that we have received. When we approach God

we are approaching the impartial judge. We are approaching the one who is a consuming fire and we must have an appropriate sense of how we stand before such a God.

We must also consider the cost of our redemption. We were delivered at incalculable cost. Christ is our Passover lamb.

He was the one who was sacrificed for us. God did not redeem us at the cost of silver and gold, even vast quantities of silver and gold, but with the precious blood of his own Son. No price could be greater than that.

This advent and gift of Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. This was always God's purpose and intention and in his providence it came to pass. Our redemption finds its origin in God's purpose before the dawn of time and now in the last times he has made this manifest for our sake.

It is out of this purpose that we are believers in God. A question to consider. What could the Old Testament prophets have known about Christ ahead of time? What do you think they would have expected?