

The Divided Monarchy

1 Kings 12-16 covers a period of about 60 years, but those years spotlight a transitional period in biblical history.

Up until now, Israel has been a united kingdom. Three kings ruled over all 12 tribes – Saul, David, Solomon. But in this section of Scripture, we move into the period of a divided kingdom.

Because of Solomon's idolatry, God tears the kingdom from Solomon's son, Rehoboam. The 10 northern tribes, or what comes to be called "*Israel*", revolt.

The southern tribe of "*Judah*" remains loyal to the sons of David.

In the American Civil War the southerners were the rebels, but it was the opposite in the Hebrew Civil War. The northerners were the rebels, and the southern most tribe of Judah, stayed faithful to David and his descendants.

It was Solomon's death, and his son Rehoboam's foolishness, that triggered this Civil War in Israel...

Rehoboam's Foolishness

Jeroboam's insurgence begins at Shechem, in the midst of Rehoboam's inauguration. *A confrontation at the coronation.* The northern tribes are tired of the heavy taxation imposed by Solomon and Rehoboam. They want hefty tax cuts.

It's interesting that the political issues today aren't much different than they were for Rehoboam. It's been said, "A man pays a luxury tax on his billfold, an income tax on the stuff he puts in it, a sales tax on whatever he takes out, and an inheritance tax if there's anything left in it when he dies." We're taxed on all fronts.

One man commented on taxation in today's America, "Patrick Henry should come back and see what taxation *with* representation looks like."

Hey, in Romans 13:6-7 we're commanded as believers in Jesus to pay our taxes. *It's our duty to pay the duty.* But as this passage conveys, whenever government will *relax the tax*, it usually turns out to be a good strategy.

When Jeroboam makes his demand, Rehoboam asks for 3 days to think it over. During those 3 days he polls his advisers. First he asks the old guys, the men who served his father, Solomon. They give Rehoboam excellent wisdom.

They tell him in verse 7, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and

answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

This is a lesson for all leaders – pastors, foremen, and CEOs. If you'll be a servant to the people they'll support you with their service.

But that's not what Rehoboam wanted to hear. He turns next to the young men – his peers – and they tell him to take a hard line.

Verse 10-11 records the response they suggest, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist! And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!" They're wanting Rehoboam to flex his muscle – show no mercy. Get tough.

This story is chocked full of lessons.

First lesson - more often than not, people are more responsive to *love* than *lashes*. They're more inclined to follow the person who feeds them, than beats them.

Second lesson - be careful whose advice you take. Don't just listen to peers – people who'll tell you what you want to hear. Listen to the older person who's been around – who's gained and gleaned some wisdom.

Devotion Box - Don't fight Against the Lord

After the northern tribes declare their independence, Rehoboam returns to Jerusalem. There he readies his army, 180,000 troops. But Civil War is averted when God sends word to Rehoboam not to fight Israel.

The break-up is God's will. In 1 Kings 12:15 we're told, "the turn of affairs was from the LORD..." God is sovereign - even over negative circumstances. All this was done to fulfill the punishment God pronounced on Solomon's idolatry. In verse 24, the Lord says to Rehoboam, "for this thing is from Me."

And here's an important lesson: if a thing is from God, be careful not to fight against it. When Rehoboam sensed the division of the kingdom was God's will, he turned back.

Fight against God, and you'll end up on the losing end of the battle.

THE SIN OF JEROBOAM

You would think, of all people, Jeroboam would guard against repeating the sin of Solomon... but he doesn't. He sets up idols in Bethel, the southern end of his kingdom – and Dan – the northern end. And here's his justification, 1 Kings 13:26-27...

"And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

When the Hebrews offered sacrifice they were required to come to Jerusalem. The Temple in Jerusalem was God's designated place of worship. At least 3 times a year the northern tribes journeyed to Judah to worship at the Temple.

But Jeroboam reasoned, if the northern tribes go to worship at Jerusalem, the southern capitol, they may become loyal to the king of Judah. Jeroboam is worried about losing influence over his people, so he develops an alternative religion.

I'm sure in Jeroboam's mind his plan was not an embrace of idolatry – though that's where it led. He wanted to worship God, but in a manner God had forbidden.

Jeroboam did what Aaron did in the wilderness. Exodus 32:4 tells us He fashioned a golden calf, then "made a proclamation... Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." But notice the word LORD is capitalized which means in the Hebrew it's the word "Yahweh" – the sacred name for the one, true, God of the Hebrews.

Aaron's calf, and Jeroboam's two calves, weren't intended to represent another god, but the true God. Revelation 4 sheds light on what they probably had in mind. There we discover that the cherubim around God's throne have the face of a calf.

Jeroboam's sin was not a violation of the first commandment,

"You shall have no other gods before Me", but of the second commandment: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above... you shall not bow down to them to serve them." God forbids the employment of any physical likenesses or representations of Himself in worship.

There's nothing wrong with a crucifix – it's a depiction of Jesus. Until it's used in prayer and worship.

God knows it's a fine line between using a tangible object to help focus my attention on God, and allowing my attention to focus on that tangible object. That's why God forbids the use of a graven image in worship.

Jeroboam did not intend to introduce idolatry in Israel, but that was the net effect of his action. His golden calves conditioned the people to embrace the blatant idolatry that was introduced by King Ahab about 60 years later.

In essence, Jeroboam established his own religion – his own altars, his own priesthood, even his own feast days. It was a *cult of convenience*.

Seldom does Satan tempt us with *no religion*. He knows we're worshippers at heart. The temptation, though, is to set up a religion that *suits my tastes*, rather than *stays true to God*. The enemy waters down the truth to make it palatable. Supposedly, Jeroboam worshipped God, but not in the way God wanted to be worshipped. He worshipped God in a way that was convenient for Jeroboam.

Let's be careful we don't repeat his mistake. Plenty of preachers today are diluting the doctrines of Christianity – watering down the demands of discipleship. Let's stay faithful to Jesus, even when we have to go out of our way to do so.

Devotion Box - High Places

Rehoboam built "*high places*", or pagan altars, throughout Judah. These altars were forbidden by God. In Leviticus 26:30 God promises to destroy them.

I wonder if there are any *high places* in our lives? - any places we value too highly? Any people, positions, or possessions we've valued more highly than our relationship with God?

If we're not careful, we can exalt the blessing above the blessing, and turn even good things into idols.

DL Moody said, "You don't have to go to heathen lands today to find false gods. America is full of them. Whatever you love more than God is your idol."

You can find idols in driveways, trophy cases, china cabinets, bank accounts. Let's tear down the high places in our lives, before the Lord tears them down for us.

Devotion Box - Retrieving Golden Shields

A tragedy occurs at the end of 1 Kings 14. Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt rips off the 500 golden shields Solomon had made, and Rehoboam doesn't even bother to retrieve them. He's content to substitute bronze shields for golden shields.

There's great symbolism behind this story. Gold is a type of God's work. Man plays no part in the manufacture of gold. Whereas bronze is an alloy of zinc and copper – it's the result of a man-made process.

Here is what's happened today in many quarters of the church. God's work – the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit - is being replaced with man-made processes. The gold is gone, and we've become content with bronze!

Churches are trying to grow through gimmicks, and self-constructed formulas, and the latest marketing techniques – rather than rely on the golden power of God. It's time leaders in the church became courageous enough to storm the gates of the enemy, and take back the golden shields that have been stolen from us.

What happens to churches also happens to individual believers. Are you trusting in bronze shields, rather than retrieving the golden shields God has fashioned for our success?

DISCERNMENT

After he leaves Bethel, it's interesting what happens to the man of God. There's an older prophet who hears of his courage, and invites him into his house to eat. God has forbidden him from eating in Bethel, lest he give people the impression God is pleased with what's going on in the land of Jeroboam.

But the old prophet lies... 1 Kings 13:18, "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (He was lying to him.) The old prophet uses the ol' "God told me so" routine.

A couple of weeks ago, I got a message from a person who called to tell me what God had told them I should do. If I'd followed the instructions, I believe the results would've been disastrous, and derailed God's plan.

I've learned just because a comment gets prefaced "God told me", or "an angel told me" doesn't mean it's of God - which is exactly what this man of God learns.

Because the prophet is older - he's a strong personality - and the man of God is a little intimidated - he trusts in what the prophet says, rather than in what God has already said. He turns in to break bread in Bethel, and disobeys God. And in the end he's eaten by a *lion*. In fact, he was already eaten up by a *lying* prophet.

Guys, I've become very leery of people with the message, "Thus saith the Lord...". I've concluded if God is in it, He'll also call me direct! God does use other people to speak to us, but we don't have to rely on their word alone. He'll confirm it to us personally - and what's truly of God will always be in harmony with His Word.

Paul's words in Galatians 1:8 would've saved the man of God. He writes, "even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." Even if an angel appears, and contradicts the Scripture, know that despite what he says, he's not an angel from God.

1 John 4:1 is applicable here, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God..." This is what the man of God should've done.

A REAL JEZEBEL

1 Kings 16:33 says, "Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."

And the worse mistake Ahab made was his choice of a bride. He married a Phoenician, named "Jezebel". Even to this day, we refer to a cunningly sinister and evil woman, as "a Jezebel".

Jeroboam established a subtle form of idolatry into Israel, but Ahab and Jezebel pulled out the stops. They promoted a no-holds-barred, blatant idolatry. They introduced the evil system of Baal worship.

The historian Josephus says Jezebel taught Baal worship to Ahab.

Jezebel brought with her to Israel the priests and prophets of Baal, and she supported their ministry. Jezebel's goal was to make Baal the god of Israel. According to 1 Kings 18:13, Jezebel even launched a campaign in Israel to exterminate the prophets of Jehovah. She was a vile and violent woman. Jezebel also had Ahab build a temple to Baal in his capitol city of Samaria.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



A SEVERE MERCY

1 Kings 14:13 reveals why God takes Jeroboam's son, and it shines light on one of the most troublesome issues in the Old Testament...

"And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave (or die a non-violent death), because in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel..."

That's so interesting! An innocent child was the only good God could find in the house of Jeroboam, so rather than allow the boy to grow up under his father's evil influence, the Lord went ahead and took him. Death spared a corrupting influence.

This was God's intent in the conquest of Canaan. Over and over Joshua is told to take no prisoners - no survivors - slaughter the women and children, as well as the soldiers. We read that, and think God was being brutal and barbaric, but we forget how hideously corrupt, and defiled Canaanite culture had become. They were into blatant demonism, animalistic behavior, gross forms of lewdness.

God spared the Canaanite kids a corrupting influence by His orders of mass extermination. It was a severe mercy on the part of God - as it was here.

Bible Scan - 1 Kings 12-16

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - March 26, 2000

3/28 - Tue - 10:00 am - Ladies' Prayer and Praise - We will be praying for the Mexico Mission Team - Mexican pot-luck to follow
7:00 pm - Annual Church Business Meeting

3/29 - Wed - 7:00 pm - High School Ministry

7:30 pm - Café Calvary - bible study by Pastor Randy , special music by Mike Bryant

3/31 - Fri - 7:30 pm - Horizons Singles

4/1 - Sat - 7:30 pm - Crossroads Singles

4/3-4 - Mon - Tue - High School Retreat - sign-ups today

4/7-8 - Fri - Sat - Middle School Camp Out - sign-ups today

4/20-21 - Thu - Fri - Good Friday Walk-Through

Next Bible Scan - April 2 - 1 Kings 17-22

Devotion Box - A Loyal Heart

"Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the LORD all his days." - 1 Kings 15:14

Bible Scan Memory Verse

The one deficiency on Asa's report card is in 15:14, "But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the LORD all his days."

As you study the kings of Israel, some of the bad kings did a few good things, whereas the good kings made some mistakes. Ultimately, they were judged good or bad based on the attitude of their heart toward God.

Asa wasn't perfect, but his heart was loyal. And that's what God is looking for in us - *not perfection, but devotion*. Even when our feet stumble, God wants our hearts fixed on Him.

Devotion Box - Break the Chain

I like what Asa does in 1 Kings 15:13, "he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron." Both Asa's parents and grandparents failed to serve the Lord, and followed after idols.

I know people who would use that as an excuse. "*I'm a victim of a dysfunctional family.*" So was Asa - his grandma worshipped a lewd image - how's that for an ungodly heritage? Yet Asa made the commitment to break the chain of family dysfunction. Rather than repeat his parents mistakes, he chose to start over.

Guys, maybe you were abused because you're dad was abused, and his dad was abused, and... wait, stop right there! You can break the chain. Just because you were abused, doesn't mean you have to be an abuser. The power of the Spirit can set you free. You can overcome a family history, and give your future lineage a brand new start. Asa did it, and you can do it too. Trust the Lord for help.

Morgan Cryer has a song, *Break the Chain*: "Sometimes sin is just a family tradition. But it'll burn the family tree to the ground. Nobody wants to inherit the flames. You sure don't want to pass them down." The chorus goes, "Cut the cord, end the curse, stop the rain. The family sin will do you in; so break the chain." With God's help, you can break those chains.

Devotion Box - Dr. Scholls or Dr. Jesus?

1 Kings 15:23 tells us of King Asa, "in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet." It reminds me of the tombstone in Richmond, Virginia which reads, "She always said her feet were killing her, but nobody believed her." Maybe that was Asa.

1 Chronicles 16:12 makes an interesting comment on Asa's illness, "Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was very severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians." He consulted all the podiatrists of the day, but never took his problem to the Lord.

I wonder though, if this applies to any of us, "he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians". We go from specialist to specialist - but we never really seek the Lord for His healing touch.

Remember, the DRs and MDs call themselves "*practicing physicians*" - only the Lord Jesus is "*the Great Physician*". Why go to Dr. Scholls, when you can go to Jesus.

Guys, you're always *a foot up* on your problems when you consult the Lord.