

14. The Divided Kingdom Pt. I

Civil War and the Division of the Kingdom

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I. The Civil War Erupts (The date: c. 931-32 B.C.)

A. The Foolish Actions of Rehoboam (I Kings 12:1-24)

- Rehoboam goes to Shechem to be crowned King
 - Jeroboam had fled to Egypt because Solomon wanted to kill him
 - The people send for Jeroboam to represent them in their desire to get Rehoboam to lessen the burdens Solomon had placed upon them:

12:3 Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4 “Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.” 5 Then he said to them, “Depart for three days, then return to me.” So the people departed.

- Rehoboam consults with the Elders
- Rehoboam consults with the “Young Men”
- Rehoboam responds to the Jeroboam and the people

12:12 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, “Return to me on the third day.” 13 And the king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him, 14 and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” 15 So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

- The Northern Tribes of Israel despair and rebel against Rehoboam’s harsh words

12:16 When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!” So Israel departed to their tents. 17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

- Rehoboam began to exert his harsh authority over the rebellious 10 northern Tribes by sending his commander (Adoram) of the forced laborers to the 10 Northern Tribes and they stone him to death
- Rehoboam flees to Jerusalem.
- This public humiliation of Rehoboam marks the division of the Kingdom

12:19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. 20 And it came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

- Rehoboam gathers his armies to make war against the Northern Tribes to restore them to his control but God sends a prophet to prevent this:

12:21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23 “Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying, 24 ‘Thus says the LORD, “You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.”’” So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD.

B. The Apostasy of Jeroboam (I Kings 12:25- 14:20)

1. The Apostasy Described (12:25-33)

- Jeroboam builds and establishes Shechem as the capitol of the Northern Kingdom
- Jeroboam establishes 2 rival worship centers in Bethel and Dan

12:25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. 27 “If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.” 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

- Jeroboam also instituted a rival priesthood

12:30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

- Jeroboam also instituted feasts and religious laws on his own initiative

32 And Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel, and went up to the altar to burn incense.

2. A Warning from God (Ch. 13)

- God sent a prophet from the South to confront Jeroboam about his apostasy
- He made a prediction and a sign that the prediction would come to pass
 - Prediction:

13:2 And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’”

NB: The prediction is fulfilled about 300 years later when Josiah sacrificed the illegitimate non-Levitical priests of his day on the altar at Bethel (II Kings 22:1-23:30).

- Sign:

13:3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, ‘Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’”

NB: This is fulfilled in verse 5 (5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.).

3. Ahijah Prophecies against Jeroboam (14:1-20)

- Jeroboam’s son Abijah becomes sick and Jeroboam sends his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah to see whether the child would die or live.
- Ahijah immediately recognizes Jeroboam’s wife and pronounces a message of doom:

14:6 And it came about when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in the doorway, that he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you with a harsh message. 7 “Go, say to Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, “Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, 8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you — yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight; 9 you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back — 10 therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone. 11 “Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken it.”

NB: Remember the prophecy that Ahijah made to Jeroboam promising a great kingdom if he obeyed God:

11:37 ‘And I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 ‘Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.

- Ahijah then tells Jeroboam’s wife that the child will die

14:12 “Now you arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die. 13 “And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam’s family shall come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

- God then pronounces a further judgment on the whole line of Northern Kings:

14:14 “Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on. 15 “For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. 16 “And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin.”

NB: The ultimate fulfillment of this was in the Assyrian captivity recorded in II Kings:

2Kings 17:19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight. 21 When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. 22 And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.

C. The Apostasy of Rehoboam (14:21-31)

- Rehoboam reigned 17 years
- Rehoboam also departed from the Lord:

14:21 Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And his mother’s name was Naamah the Ammonitess. 22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed. 23 For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. 24 And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

- Therefore God judged the Southern Kingdom and sent Shishak of Egypt to plunder King Rehoboam's treasures

II. The Divided Kingdom

A. The Northern Kingdom (The 10 Tribes now known as Israel)

NB: The Northern Kingdom lasted from 932 BC until 722 BC (210 yrs.). It included 19 Kings representing 9 "Dynasties."

B. The Southern Kingdom (The 2 Tribes now known as "Judah")

NB: The Southern Kingdom lasted from 932BC until 586 BC (346 yrs.). It included 20 Kings.