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1 KINGS 12:1-14:31

Last week we saw how Solomon died. We saw that Solomon finished his life in a much less devoted way than he began his life.

Way back in *Deuteronomy*, God had laid down His requirements of the king of Israel. He told Moses that he must not multiply horses to himself and he must not multiply wives to himself and he must not multiply gold to himself. Those were the things he must **not** do.

But, God also told Moses something the king **must** do. And that was he must write for himself a copy of the Law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests and he shall keep it with him and read it all the days of his life...

And God went on to tell Moses that the king must do this so that
...he would learn to fear the LORD his God by carefully observing
all the words of the Law so that his heart may not be lifted up above the common people.

Well, we saw last week that Solomon failed in all these areas, didn't he? And because of Solomon's failure, God said He would divide the kingdom. God, in His great mercy, waited until after the death of Solomon to do this and we saw last week that Solomon died after reigning as king for 40 years.

This week we begin to see the results and consequences of Solomon's sin. This week we begin to see how the divided kingdom of Israel comes about...and how these kingdoms will shape up. Who will be their kings? How will they lead the people? Will they wholly follow Jehovah?

So, let's look at how this kingdom was divided...

1 Kings 12:1-5...

Well, here Rehoboam was made king by all Israel.

The capital of Israel was Jerusalem, but Rehoboam chose Shechem to be made king. I don't know why. Maybe he thought... "I am the new king. Saul is dead. David is dead. My father, Solomon, is dead and now I'm the king. And I want a new beginning. I don't want to live in the past."

At any rate, for whatever reason...all the people are assembled in Shechem to make Rehoboam king...but something happened.

Jeroboam appeared on the scene. Jeroboam lodged a complaint with Rehoboam. He asked Rehoboam to lighten the grievous burden Solomon had put upon the people.

What had Solomon done to the people? Well, in order to build the temple and his own house and the houses for his wives and the stables for his horses and to rebuild the cities he rebuilt, it took money. And he taxed the people and he also forced the people to labor.

And we need to understand that most of this building went on in the southern part of the kingdom. Jerusalem was in the southern part of the kingdom. And the people of the north were sick and tired of being made to pay by their money and labor what was benefiting the people of the south.

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So, Jeroboam came to Rehoboam with a reasonable complaint and a reasonable request. He simply asked Rehoboam to lighten up...to consider the feelings of the people his father had taken advantage of for so long

But, Rehoboam sent Jeroboam away...

Verses 6-11...

King Rehoboam sought the advice of the elders who had served Solomon and **they** told him to lighten up...to be a servant to the people and encourage them and they would be his servants forever.

But, that didn't set well with Rehoboam...so he sought counsel from his friends...and they told him that he needed to impose even **stricter** burdens on the people than his father had imposed.

What kind of burdens had Solomon imposed? Well, **1 Kings 5** tells us he had forced his own people into labor. They were sent to Lebanon for a month and then two months at home. God had freed His children from bondage in Egypt and Solomon put them back under bondage...**maybe not full-time bondage, but bondage nonetheless.**

It is also believed that Solomon had not only levied forced labor from the people, but he had also levied very heavy taxes from them...

There are two kinds of counsel found in the Bible. There is **godly** counsel and there is **ungodly** counsel. There are two kinds of counsel today. We can seek out and follow godly counsel or we can seek out and follow ungodly counsel.

And Rehoboam decided to follow the ungodly counsel of his friends.

He told Jeroboam in **verses 12-14...**

"I've made my decision. I've sought counsel and here's what I've decided.

I'm going to make it harder on you than my father ever did.
I'm going to make your life more unbearable than my father ever did.

When you whined and complained against him, he brought whips upon you...but I won't do that. When you whine and complain against me, I'll bring scorpions upon you."

And probably...in Rehoboam's youth and immaturity, he thought this was the end of it. But, God had other plans...

Verse 15...

See, ungodly men with their **ungodly counsel** and their **ungodly decisions cannot thwart the will of God.** God had **already** said that Jeroboam would be given ten tribes. God had **already** said that Jeroboam would be king of the northern ten tribes.

And the only reason God was leaving Rehoboam in control

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of anything at all was **because of David**. Over and over, we see that God uses a little phrase like this... “...**for the sake of David I will do such and such...**”

God didn't divide the kingdom of Israel during the life of Solomon **for the sake of David**. God didn't take every one of the tribes away from Solomon's son **for the sake of David**.

We mentioned this last week, but I believe it bears repeating. David didn't live a perfect life. But, **David was a man after God's own heart**.

David **observed God's statutes and commandments**.
David **and contrite heart before God every time he sinned**.

David had a **broken**

David had a **love for worship and the house of God**.

David had a **love for the people of God and treated them fairly**.

David **never allowed idols and idol worship in the kingdom**.

David **was God's man and David left a wonderful legacy for Solomon**.

But, Solomon left **his** son, Rehoboam, a legacy of idol-worship and of treating God's people unfairly and of being full of pride and of breaking every rule God had laid out for the kings of Israel to follow. It was for the sake of David and the beloved city of Jerusalem that God protected Israel in the first place.

And it was for the sake of Solomon that the kingdom of Israel was divided. For years and years to come, the land of Israel struggled with idols...false gods...**and it all began with Solomon**.

I hate to “beat up” on Solomon. But, I hope we don't forget that we can take a page from David's life, or we can take a page from Solomon's. We can leave our children and our grandchildren a godly heritage, or we can leave them with a heritage that teaches them it's alright to follow after other gods.

Let's go on and see what happens next...

Verses 16-17...

Here is the **reality** of the divided kingdom!

Verse 19...

Here is the **result** of the divided kingdom! **Rebellion and civil war!**

Now, let me ask you...who had decreed that the kingdom be divided? **God** had decreed it! What happens when God decrees something? Well, God says what He means and He means what He says, doesn't He?

But, Rehoboam didn't like this. He felt cheated. His **grandfather** had reigned over a **united** kingdom. His **father** had reigned over a **united** kingdom. And if he had anything to say about it, **he** would reign over a **united** kingdom, too!

So, Rehoboam decided he would go to war against Jeroboam. He would take his people and he would fight against Jeroboam and his people. But, he wouldn't be fighting against Jeroboam and the people of the north. He would be fighting against God.

But, God sent His prophet, Shemaiah, to tell Rehoboam not to go to war against Jeroboam.

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Verses 22-24...

And to Rehoboam's credit, he didn't mount the attack against Jeroboam that he had planned. And I wish we could say that the rest of Rehoboam's life was spent in complete compliance with the will of God! But, sadly it wasn't and we'll see that in just a few minutes.

I want us to turn our attention for the next few minutes to **Jeroboam**. What kind of a king was he? What kind of a spiritual leader was he? Were the people better off for his leadership or were they worse off?

Verses 25-33...

Let me tell you what I believe was the primary motivating factor in the reign of Jeroboam. I believe Jeroboam was motivated by **fear**.

Back in **chapter 11** we see that the Bible calls Jeroboam "**a mighty man of valor.**" Now, when was the last time you used that word? I mean, we just don't use that word very often, do we?

When you think about it, however, we've seen many mighty men of valor on our TV screens lately, haven't we? I think our military branches are full of mighty men of valor...men of courage and strength and worth and virtue and substance. **And that's how Jeroboam was described back in chapter 11...**

Yet, we see Jeroboam overcome with fear in the verses we just read. What was he afraid of? He was afraid the people over whom he reigned would leave him and become loyal to Rehoboam, wasn't he? **He was afraid the people would start liking Rehoboam more than they liked him, wasn't he?**

Let's just see if we can draw some lessons from Jeroboam's fear. Let's think of the things this fear did in his life...

1) Fear caused Jeroboam to forget the promises of God...

As we've already said, the divided kingdom wasn't Jeroboam's idea, it was God's. Jeroboam wasn't responsible for his being king of the Northern kingdom, God was responsible.

God had promised Jeroboam if he would walk in His ways and keep His commandments and do what was right in God's sight that He would give Israel, the Northern Kingdom to him.

And here we see Jeroboam forgetting that. I mean, he didn't even recall these words and say, "Well, God made me a promise. God always keeps His promises. I'm not going to worry about what's going on in the Southern Kingdom. I'm just going to walk before the Lord a pure and holy walk..."

But, Jeroboam didn't do that...Fear caused Jeroboam to forget the promises of God.

2) Fear caused Jeroboam to corrupt the worship of God...

He set up a new **object** of worship...he set up two golden calves! Does this sound familiar? Well, of course it does! Remember when Moses was up on the mountain receiving the tablets of the Law from God?

Remember when he came down and saw what Aaron had made? He confronted his brother and he said, "Aaron, how could you possibly let this happen? How could you let these people worship a golden calf? Where did this thing come from?"

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And Aaron had a great answer, didn't he!

He said, "Oh well, everybody took off their earrings and their noserings and their necklaces and I just threw all of it into the fire and out it came! I mean just like you see, that's the way it came out of the fire. Isn't that something, Moses?"

And what happened? God judged the people because of that! And here are **two golden calves**...as though God would be pleased more with two than He was with one...

I mean, here is Jeroboam saying, "Now, folks, here are two golden calves. You don't have to go down to Jerusalem anymore to worship. You can just stay up here and worship."

Don't you imagine that Jeroboam said, "Well, the folks already have Chemosh and Milcom and Molech and Ashtoreth...Solomon has seen to that, I'll give them something they haven't had before. I'll give them **two golden calves!**" By the way, before it's over, the Jews would even put a brass serpent on a pole and worship it!!!

"Hear O Israel...the LORD your God is one God." Not one, not two. The heart of the Judeo-Christian faith is a **monotheistic** theology! There is one God and He is a jealous God and He will not share His glory with another!

But, not only did Jeroboam create a new **object** of worship. He also created a new **place** of worship.

Now...God can be worshipped anywhere! Do you believe that? I do! God can be worshipped anywhere! But, God had ordained that the worship of these feast days be done in Jerusalem around the temple. That was the word of God.

Oftentimes people will say even today, "Well, the place isn't important. I can worship God as well on the lake as I can in the church. I can worship God as well on the golf course or on the beach as I can in the church."

But, God has not only ordained **private worship**. God has also ordained **public worship** and that's to be done with God's people in God's house. God has told us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some...

Those who weren't here Sunday night missed a mighty moving of the Holy Spirit. Those who weren't here Wednesday missed another moving of the Holy Spirit. You just can't afford to miss around here, can you?

Jeroboam also created a new **priesthood** for worship. God had ordained the tribe of Levi to be priests, hadn't He? Apparently there weren't any Levitical priests in the Northern Kingdom. But, that didn't stop Jeroboam. He just designated men to be priests from other tribes, didn't he?

He was saying, "Our object of worship isn't important. And the place we worship isn't important. The preacher isn't important. As long as we're sincere...that's all that matters." Does this sound familiar?

How many churches do you know of that used to be Bible preaching churches and they've become "seeker-friendly" just preaching and teaching what tickles the ears of those who come?

Jeroboam also created a new **time** for worship...he set it up for the eighth month.

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Now, **Passover**, God said, would be in the **first month**.

Pentecost would be seven weeks later, which usually put it in the **third month**.

The **Feast of Tabernacles** would be in the **seventh month**.

The **Day of Atonement** would also be in the **seventh month**.

So, when Jeroboam set up his worship he doesn't do it the first month with Passover or the third month with Pentecost or the seventh month with the Feast of Tabernacles or the Day of Atonement...he says it will be the eighth month.

Jeroboam said, "We're gonna do it my way!"

We're living in a day when we're hearing an awful lot being said and professed and taught which says that worship is a man-made experience...that man sets the terms of worship...man sets the order of worship. **But worship is ordained by God. Man cannot approach God on his own terms. Man must approach God on God's terms.**

That's the lesson we draw from the story of Cain and Abel. God had said, "**You come to Me through blood.**" Abel brought a blood offering. But, Cain didn't want to do that. Cain was a farmer and he said, "I'm just going to bring baskets of vegetables. Let my brother come the blood way. I'm going to come my own way."

And the book of **Hebrews** says that God accepted Abel's offering and He rejected Cain's.

Fear had caused Jeroboam to **forget the promises of God** and to **corrupt the worship of God**, but also

3) Fear caused Jeroboam to experience the judgment of God...

Chapter 13 tells us about an unnamed prophet. We don't know his name. **Verse 1** simply tells us that a man of God came from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD. God always has a man of God ready to confront the evils of our world.

One day **Pharaoh** rose up and what did God do? God sent a man by the name of Moses.

One day **David** got out of line, and what did God do? God sent a man by the name of Nathan.

One day **Peter** got a little out of whack and got to feeling a little too good about being a Jew, and God sent Paul to him to straighten him out.

How many times has God sent someone to exhort and admonish you when you've strayed from Him?

And here's an unnamed prophet and he goes to Jeroboam and he says,

"Jeroboam, I've got a word for you. One day God is going to tear your house down and raise up a man by the name of Josiah."

Now, here's an interesting thing... Josiah wasn't born until 300 years after this prophecy was given. You know...I believe God knows the end from the beginning and everything in between, don't you?

And the man of God told Jeroboam something else... **"That altar is about to be torn in half."**

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Well, we don't have time to go over the whole story, but the bottom line is that the altar **was** torn in half and God **did** judge Jeroboam and we know that from **2 Chronicles 13:20**: ***"Neither did Jeroboam recover strength...and the LORD struck him, and he died."***

All because of fear...the promises of God were forgotten.
All because of fear the worship of God was corrupted.
All because of fear the judgment of God came upon Jeroboam.

All because of fear, Jeroboam set a sad precedent for the rest of the kings of the Northern Kingdom. There would not be a good king in their history. The people would be idol-worshippers and there would be **continued strife** and **civil war** between Israel and Judah.

God hasn't given us the spirit of fear! Jesus said over and over again, ***"Fear not, for I have overcome the world...you don't have to be afraid of anything because anything you would ever be afraid of, I've already overcome!"***

Well, to quickly summarize the rest of our passage of Scripture...let me just tell you this...

The kingdom continued to be divided. **Jeroboam** reigned for **22 years** over the Northern Kingdom and continued walking his own way, before God struck him down.

Rehoboam reigned for **17 years** and during his reign he **also** corrupted the worship of Jehovah in the Southern Kingdom.
1 Kings 14:21-24...

Rehoboam's reign was characterized by wickedness and war.

I want to mention one more thing and then we'll be finished. The latter part of **chapter 14** tells us about some shields. When God gave Solomon the instructions for building the temple and all those intricate details and decorations and all those things that accompanied the temple, one of the things God told Solomon to make **200 large shields of gold**.

Now, I want to ask you something...

What value is there in battle of a shield of gold? I mean...think about it. Gold is a very soft metal. It can't stop an arrow or a spear. It can't stop a sword. Why did God tell Solomon to build 200 large shields of gold?

God never intended for them to be used for battle. They were to be used when the king went to the house of God...he and all his entourage would pass between a line of 100 soldiers on one side and 100 soldiers on the other side.

Can you imagine anything much more impressive than 200 large gold shields held by 200 Hebrew soldiers as the king went to worship Jehovah?

But, what happened to them? **Verse 26** tells us that the king of Egypt came against Jerusalem and the temple and its treasures and stole everything and took them back to Egypt...even the 200 large shields of gold.

And the next verses tell us that Rehoboam had shields of bronze made in their place. And **verse 28** tells us that when the king went to the house of God that the guards would carry these shields of bronze.

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Now, 200 large shields of gold are impressive. But, 200 shields of bronze are not. And I believe in many churches today we see the gold being replaced by the bronze. **Many have traded the shield of gold worship for the shield of brass worship.**

See, many people will say on Sunday... "Well, it's Sunday, we **have** to go to church today." Or "we **have** to go to Sunday School today."

No! We don't **have** to go to church and Sunday School! We **get** to go to church and Sunday School.

We've traded the gold shield of telling others about Jesus for the bronze shield of "Well, I certainly don't want to offend anybody..."

We've traded the gold shield of the plan of salvation for the bronze shield of "Well, if you're just sincere in your belief, God will let you go to heaven."

I wonder what kind of a standard you and I are on... Are we on the gold standard or the bronze standard. I mean, if gold stars were still given for attendance...would you and I get one? Or would our star be silver or bronze or brass?

We've even traded the gold shield of having our hearts open for God to do a real work of revival in us many times for the bronze shield of just showing up with hearts that are hard and cold and not sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Real revival comes when Christians get their hearts renewed and rekindled and refreshed and revived. You can't revive something that hasn't already been "vived," can you?

And we mustn't allow Satan to tell any of us that we mustn't get our salvation affirmed. I mean, if you're having doubts, get it straight...just as we've seen so many do this past week. The majority of those who came last Sunday night and Wednesday night were **church members coming to be saved or to get their salvation assured!**

My prayer is that we have seen some practical application to our own lives in this passage of Scripture. Remember that the Word of God is much, much more than a lesson in **history** and **geography** and **personalities**.