

#14 Study Guide
Through the Bible

Timeless Truth: Leadership always has consequences, with the LORD or without Him.

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The Divided Kingdom

A Kingdom Torn in Two
1 Kings 12-16

Solomon, "peace", watched as the LORD let peace to slip away during his final years as king. Solomon's boy, Rehoboam, was the heir for the 12 tribes of Israel. But at Rehoboam's coronation ceremony, a large party of irritated leaders, led by Mr. Jeroboam, showed up.

The delegation requested that the new King grant relief for his subjects. They had lived under the heavy burden of taxation and forced labor of his recently deceased dad, King Solomon.

Solomon's boy, Rehoboam, wisely sought advice. Unwisely rejected the counsel of the experienced elders. Unwisely followed advice from his peers. They figured the only reason for complaining was that life was not hard enough yet.

They recommended showing the people just who the boss is around here. Bullying and intimidation they claimed were better leadership tactics than serving.



The Divided Kingdom

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So King Rehoboam, as his first official act, promised even heavier taxation and more forced labor. With this singular decision and the knee-jerk reaction that followed, the nation fatally and forever divided.

Only Rehoboam's tribe of Judah remained loyal to the King. The other 10 tribes to the north seceded. The 10 Northern tribes took the name "*Israel*" and made Mr. Jeroboam their king. (Thus starts confusion and the endless mishmash of names and rules and dates.

This point also marks the point when many well-intentioned Bible readers throw up their hands in frustration and miss out on continued reading.)

Mr. Jeroboam, like Moses' brother Aaron centuries before, set up idols of fake, but exciting and fun, worship. This action took the Northern Ten (Israel) ever deeper into idolatry without even knowing it. The LORD sent a prophet with the truth.



God Withers King's Hand!



The LORD's prophet warned of judgment for their neglect of pure worship of the pure God. God foretold that someday a king, a descendant of David, would destroy their fervently zealous, untrue worship sites.

He foretold that the king would be called named "the Lord supports-the Lord saves-the Lord heals". This

promise was kept 290 years later in the person of King Josiah.

As a sign to authenticate the LORD's unbelievable message, the pagan altar split in two and King Jeroboam's outstretched hand instantly withered, covered with tissue rot, leprosy...then, at his begging, was instantly restored!

This did little to curb Jeroboam's mixture of truth and lies. When his son became ill he sent his wife, in disguise, to the prophet Ahijah to inquire about their son's fate.

Doom at the Door-Step

"...the boy is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, has found anything good."

1 Kings 14

The LORD through his prophet said her husband's dynasty would soon end; the Northern-Ten (Israel) would be carried off to captivity. The news about her sick boy was startling, joyful and crushing.

"As for you (Queen), go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only

one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, has found anything good." 1 Kings 14

She ran away from the truth back to her husband. The harsh message of doom really hurt her feelings and caused sadness. But even this truth did

not cause her to turn away from sin and ask for mercy for her child.

Sadly, the message was authenticated with the death of their son as soon as her footsteps crossed the entrance to the palace.

Just as the LORD had said.



God's people left Truth behind.



God's chosen people were now mixing truth with the false. Over a very short time, less than a generation, there was little difference between the culture of the Northern Ten Tribes and the original Canaanites.

God's righteousness and cove-

nant loyalty moved Him to jealous and righteous anger.

King Rehoboam allowed Judah to fall into the same feeling-based mix of truth and false as the Northern Ten. The great golden years of peace bruised in the harsh blows of Shishak king of Egypt King

Before we continue, remember 1 Kings 10:16-17 and Solo-

mon making temple shields from hammered gold. Egypt's Pharaoh Shishak invaded Jerusalem .

He carried off the treasures of palace and temple. This was most likely when the *Ark of the Covenant* was lost. In 1 Kings God doesn't even mention the ark by name. Instead our LORD draws attention to the loss of Solomon's gold shields.

Goldish Bronze is ok. Right?

Once the gold was taken Egypt's victory, the once wealthy nation of Judah did not have the gold to replace them. Rehoboam had copies made from bronze. (1 Kings 14:27).

Every Sabbath, as Rehoboam made his way to the temple, his Secret Service agents equipped with those bronze shields surrounded him. I imagine, as the sun shone down on that bronze, it must have dazzled the eyes of anyone looking - maybe even giving the appearance of real gold -

but it was not.

After worship, the palace guards would put the shields away, locked in a cabinet where they would stay until the next Sabbath for their weekly parade to the temple.



Fake gold shields, phony replicas that might fool young people and children. But all who had actually seen the solid gold shields of Solomon's guard knew what was happening. Fake

glory, taken out once a week for display, then put aside.

Authentic or Wannabe?

It's easy to play dress up on worship day. Some people head for church wearing their shiny best. They look the part, but there's no authentic relationship with God.

Some prefer to take refuge behind fake, but flashy, shields that are almost like gold and look pretty much like gold if you hold it just right and

kind of side glance at it in the setting sunshine glancing off a wandering cloud....

Am I searching for authentic gold? ...or phony, wannabe bronze? Is my Defender real? ...or a fun feeling, a nice idea?

Solomon's shields of gold, symbols of the LORD's pure protection, were stolen. This becomes a children's devo-

tion, a visible picture of the spiritual: God's people had replaced the truth with a false & true, a shiny golden-wannabe mishmash.

They had convinced themselves that faith was a smorgasbord kind of drive-through thing. The LORD God set before them His Word — a rich, 7 course meal for which the LORD had spared no



God's Old Testament people delighted in an exciting sinful mixture of true & false worship.

After the SPLIT

After the split, there is a long list of idolatrous kings who lead both southern *Judah* and northern *Israel* further and further way from God.

King Abijah, the son of Rehoboam became the next king of Judah. His rule was short and sinful like his father's. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had a few godly kings over the next centuries.

But now comes the shocker: NO GODLY KINGS reigned in the Northern Ten, (Israel). Things went from bad (**Jereboam**) to worse (Omri).

Omri had an even more evil son, King **Ahab**, and her royal wickedness, Queen **Jezebel**, led Israel to bigger, newer, exciting, fresh and glowing mixtures of truth and lies.

The people were encouraged

to tolerate lies. They delighted in this exciting mixture of true & false worship. After all, it had the LORD's name stamped across the front door....and the king and queen were doing it....

Slowly, all were led to deeper and deeper detestable things, including "white-witchcraft", sex orgies, drunken partying, baby-killing...the LORD's Word was now a whisper barely heard.

Why record all of this rebellion, deceit and wickedness of people pretending to be real?

1. People need to know and to teach that those who reject the LORD will reap His grim judgment.

2. People need to know and teach that although others may suffer through terrible consequences, God's judgment is always designed to redirect His people; godly sorrow produces lives that reflect what lips are saying.

3. People can absolutely rely on our LORD and Savior who relentlessly pursues His believers, through prophets like Ahijah and kings like Asa.

4. The LORD Almighty God will always lead His people in paths of righteousness for His own name's sake, to return to Him.

The era of the kings, despite the terrible abuse of God's mercy and freedom, is the beginning of a path that leads to the King of kings. The coming Messiah-King would redeem not just God's people in this era of division and strife, but all people and every division of every age from everlasting to everlasting. We review this awesome activity of the LORD every year during the weeks before Easter called Lent.



Snapshot Review: After Saul, David and Solomon, the nation divides. The ten northern tribes take the name **Israel**. Their capital is **Samaria** over all they had **19 kings, all of them evil**.

The two remaining tribes in the south [Judah & Benjamin] are called **Judah**. Their capital is **Jerusalem**. Through Judah God kept His promise to David that One from his family would always be on the throne. Judah in the south had **20 kings. Sadly, only 7 were godly, good; One was Perfect..**

1. What went into King Jeroboam's decision (North) to add idol-worship to the worship of the true God (South)?

2. The political split of Israel from Judah led to spiritual split and then warfare for hundreds of years. What are some of the things that divide Christians today?

3. What do you expect from national leaders? List characteristics do you think should be in any leader:

4. God turned King Jeroboam's hand leprous when he tried to attack the Lord's prophet. King Jeroboam begged and the LORD restored his health. Then sadly he tried to pay for the healing given him. How do you receive correction?

5. In what ways are God's people *similar to* non-Christian cultures around us today?

6. How are God's people *different from* other cultures?

7. Why would God allow evil kings [so many!] to rule over his people?

8. How does leadership shape a representative republic like our USA today?

KIND TIME – Encourage one another. Can you share how we can pray for you?