

PART 5:

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

As God's people (the nation of Israel) had settled into the Canaan land according to God's promise, the people rejected God as their King and demanded to have an earthly king appointed to reign over them. Saul fit the prototypical picture of a king, yet displeased God and lost his kingdom. David (a man after God's own heart) was then established as king and was promised that his kingdom would be established forever. David's son Solomon reigned after David's death and built the temple in Jerusalem. However, Solomon rebelled against God, and God promised that the kingdom would be torn in the future. Now, we focus on the fifth major section of the Bible story: "The Divided Kingdom."

1 KINGS 12:1-19

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Jeroboam (who God had foretold would be given ten tribes of Israel, 1 Kings 11:26-40) and the assembly of Israel asked King Rehoboam to lighten the burden that had been placed on them during Solomon's reign. However, contrary to the advice of the elders, Rehoboam promised to increase the burden. This resulted in the kingdom of Israel dividing! Ten tribes followed Jeroboam and became known as Israel (with its capital in Samaria). Two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) remained with Rehoboam and became known as Judah (with its capital remaining in Jerusalem).

1 KINGS 12:25-33

Jeroboam recognized the enticement the people might have to return to follow King Rehoboam of Judah. He knew they would still need to go to Jerusalem to worship because of the temple, the sacrifices, and the festivals. To remedy this, King Jeroboam made two golden calves and put them in two convenient locations (i.e., the northernmost and southernmost parts of Israel). He also created his own priesthood (not from the tribe of Levi) and his own festival.

1 KINGS 13:31-34; 14:6-11

Jeroboam's actions greatly displeased God and would result in the kingly line of Israel to be passed to others, and disaster to come on Jeroboam's descendants (1 Kings 13:1-14:20; 15:25-32). Over time, the kingly line of Israel would change hands multiple times through 19 or 20 kings (depending on how they are counted). Of these kings, none were loyal to God and most were said to walk according to the sins of Jeroboam (1 Kings 15:26, 34; 16:2, 19, 25-26, 30-33; 22:52-53; 2 Kings 3:2-3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28). Throughout this time of frequent rebellion in Israel, God sent His servants, the prophets, to warn Israel (e.g., Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Amos, Hosea) about their wickedness and its consequences.

1 KINGS 14:21-24, 30-31

King Rehoboam was said to have provoked God to greater jealous anger than what all their ancestors had done previously. Judah worshiped false gods and imitated the evil practices of the nations around them. Despite this, however, God kept His promise to King David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Kings 11:34-36). Throughout the history of the nation of Judah, there were 19 kings who reigned over Judah who descended from David. Of these, most did not follow the Lord, though some did at times (e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah). Throughout this time, God sent His servants, the prophets, to Judah to warn them about their wickedness and its consequences (e.g., Shemaiah, Hanani, Huldah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah).

2 KINGS 17:8-23

The nation of Israel ignored God's warnings and did not repent. Consequently, God did as He said and delivered them into captivity to the Assyrians (722 B.C.). They had rejected Jehovah God and chosen other gods, forsaking the covenant their ancestors had made with Jehovah. The northern kingdom of Israel only lasted a little more than 200 years (931-722 B.C.). Many were killed and families torn apart (Hosea 9:10-14; 13:16). Of those who were not killed, many were exiled to other places (Amos 5:27; 6:7; Hosea 9:3, 17). In addition, the Assyrians brought people from other places and settled them into Israelite cities (2 Kings 17:24-41). Because they rejected God, they would not be His people (Hosea 1:9). At this point, only Judah remained. However, God would not neglect His

promise to Abraham and pointed to future hope (Hosea 1:10-11)!

2 CHRONICLES 36:5-7, 9-10, 11-14

After Israel went into captivity, Judah went into Babylonian captivity. Their downfall was slowed by some periods (under some good kings) when they were trying to be loyal to their covenant with God. Yet, they also ultimately ignored God's warnings and rejected Jehovah God and their covenant with Him. They were defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon in three waves. The first under Judah's King Jehoiakim (605 B.C.). The second under King Jehoiachin (597 B.C.). The third under King Zedekiah (586 B.C.).

2 CHRONICLES 36:15-21

Although Judah's downfall into exile was slower than Israel's, it happened nonetheless. God had often warned Judah through the prophets, but they would not listen to them, mocked them, and mistreated them (e.g., Jeremiah). There had now reached a point where God's wrath burned against Judah in such a way that there was no remedy left but to defeat them. In it all, God's glory had departed from the temple and Jerusalem, as the people had violated their covenant with God (Ezekiel 8-11). The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (including the wall around the city, the temple, and the palaces). All its valuables were taken to Babylon (including the articles of the temple). Many suffered and were killed mercilessly in Jerusalem's defeat (Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 2; 4). Those who did not die were either left behind, fled, or were taken into exile in Babylon. Yet, there was a promise of a return after 70 years (Jeremiah 29).

CONCLUSION

God had fulfilled His promise to make a great nation from Abraham's descendants and had given that nation a special land. If the people had kept their covenant with Jehovah, they would have experienced great blessings. However, they had rejected God as their King and wanted human kings to rule over them. Most of these kings, however, did not lead them to be loyal to God. The kingdom of Israel had now divided. Israel quickly departed from God's covenant and was taken into exile by the Assyrians. Later, Judah rejected their covenant with God and was taken into exile by the Babylonians. Yet there was a promise of a future hope to return to the land – and of a glorious kingdom!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Why did Israel divide?

How did King Jeroboam displease God, and what were the consequences?

How did the kings of Israel lead Israel?

How did King Rehoboam displease God?

How did the kings of Judah lead Judah?

What was different about the kingly lines of Israel and Judah?

What happened to Israel because of their rebellion against God?

What happened to Judah because of their rebellion against God?

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Written by Eric Krieg

Watch the video @ WWW.GODSAIDSO.COM/DGW95