

**Connecting Through the Word
Influenced by the Wrong People
1 Kings 12-16; 2 Chronicles 10-16**

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

Psalms 33:10-12

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

1 Kings 12:1-15

*1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.
2 And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.
3 And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam,
4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."*

5 He said to them, "Go away for three days, then come again to me." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?"

7 And they said to him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."

8 But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.

9 And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?'"

10 And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,' thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs.

11 And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, "Come to me again the third day."

13 And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him,

14 he spoke to them according to the counsel 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 affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

These chapters record "the beginning of the end". With the death of Solomon, the nation's glory begins to fade.

First Kings covers about 125 years of history, 40 years of Solomon's reign, and about 85 years for the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah.

Only five kings reigned in Judah during that period, while eight kings reigned in Israel, and all of them were wicked. Second Kings then takes up the account of the Assyrian captivity of Israel (the northern tribes) and the Babylonian captivity of Judah (the southern tribes).

1. The Division of the Kingdom **1 Kings 12:1-14:20**

A. Rehoboam's folly **1 Kings 12:1-15**

Solomon's vast program of building and expansion had brought fame and glory to the nation, but the taxes were heavy upon the people and they were hoping for some relief from the burden. In his later years, Solomon's values had changed and he was more interested in material wealth than spiritual blessing (see Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26). Had his son Rehoboam listened to the wisdom of the older leaders, he would have won the hearts of the people; but he was unwilling to be a servant to the people. He listened to the younger men, who lacked experience and, as a consequence, made a foolish decision. The way to be a ruler is to be a servant (Mark 10:42-45).

B. Jeroboam's rebellion **1 Kings 12:16-13:34**

God had already chosen Jeroboam to be the king of the ten tribes (11:26-40) because of Solomon's sins (11:9-13). Sin is a great divider and destroyer. Only Judah and Benjamin were left to Rehoboam, and God did this for David's sake.

Jeroboam failed to live up to his opportunities, for he led the ten tribes into idolatry. He was afraid that the people of his kingdom would go up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, and there revolt against him, so he made it "convenient" for them to worship in their own territory. He repeated Aaron's sin (Ex. 32:1-6) and made calves of gold, putting one in Dan and the other in Bethel. He also consecrated places of worship and organized his own priesthood. It was a man-made religion, designed for the convenience of the people; therefore, it had nothing of the power of God or the blessing of God. Of course, God could not permit such apostasy to continue, so He sent a message of warning and judgment to the king (1 Kings 13).

Jeroboam was burning incense at the altar, acting like a priest. The mysterious man of God announced the birth of the future king Josiah (13:2, see 2 Kings 23:15-18), and also warned that the king's man-made religion would be judged and destroyed. When Jeroboam tried to arrest the prophet, the king's extended hand was dried up and the altar broke open, just as the prophet had predicted. The king begged to be healed, and the man prayed for him. The king then tried to trap the prophet by inviting him to the palace, but the man of God refused to fall for the trick.

It is unfortunate that the man of God listened to the lies of a fellow prophet and lost his life. If there is one lesson to be learned from 13:11-34, it is this: don't let other people determine the will of God for your life. Obey what God's Word says to you, regardless of the cost.

C. God's judgment **1 Kings 14:1-20**

Abijah was a young man when he became fatally ill (his father reigned for twenty-two years), and, of course, the king was concerned lest there be no son to succeed him on the throne. Jeroboam could not turn to his false gods for help; he had to turn to the prophet Ahijah for guidance. This was the prophet who first told Jeroboam that he would be the new king. The king dared not go himself; he sent his wife in a disguise. But the blind prophet could see more with his spiritual eyes than Jeroboam could see with his physical eyes. Ahijah exposed the disguise and sent the wicked king a message of judgment. The message came true: the queen returned home, and, when she entered the house, her son died. It is tragic that Jeroboam turned away from the Lord, for he could have led the ten tribes into wonderful blessing and victory.

Instead, he set a terrible example for other kings to follow.

2. The Decline of Judah

1 Kings 14:21-15:24

A. Rehoboam

1 Kings 14:21-31; 2 Chron. 12

For seventeen years, this evil son of Solomon led the people into terrible sins. Instead of walking in the laws of the Lord, he patterned himself after the wicked nations Israel had defeated.

God punished him by bringing Egypt up to defeat the nation. The people had lost their spiritual values: **the expensive gold shields were now replaced with cheaper bronze shields.** Things "looked the same," but God knew they were not the same.

B. Abijam (Abijah)

1 Kings 15:1-8; 2 Chron. 13

"Like father, like son." God allowed him to reign only three short years. Note that his mother was related to Absalom ("Abishalom" in v. 2). He declared war on Jeroboam and God gave him

victory for David's sake. The victory was purely military; there was no spiritual revival in the nation.

C. Asa

1 Kings 15:9-24; 2 Chron. 14-16

Asa was a good king, a welcome change after years of evil rulers. He tried to take away the sins established by Rehoboam (14:24).

2 Chronicles 15:1-2

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

There was a brief period of rest and revival under his leadership. He even deposed his own mother because she was an idol worshiper (2 Chron. 15:16).

Sad to say, his reign did not end as well as it began, for he trusted in men for protection and failed to trust in the Lord. He used the temple wealth to hire Syria to fight for him; and this ungodly alliance cost him much personally.

One of the great verses and promises in the Old Testament is found in this passage as the seer Hanani confronts Asa about this alliance.

2 Chronicles 16:7-9

7 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you.

8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand.

9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

D. Jehoshaphat

1 Kings 15:24; 22:41-50; 2 Chron. 17:1-21:3

The writer here does not give the history of this good king who purged out the idolatry and who sought to teach the people the Word of God. God gave him many victories, because he "sought the Lord with all his heart" (2 Chron. 22:9).

3. The Decay of Israel (15:25-16:34)

Six kings are listed here, starting with Nadab and ending with Ahab, and all of them were evil.

Nadab maintained his father's wicked idolatry; he was slain by Baasha during one of the battles with the Philistines.

Baasha reigned for twenty-four years and fulfilled the prophecy of 14:14-15 that all of Jeroboam's seed would be destroyed. Jehu the prophet then came with a message for Baasha, however, predicting the destruction of Baasha's household.

Baasha's son, **Elah**, reigned for less than two years and was killed by Zimri, one of his captains, while the king was drunk.

Zimri led the nation for only one week (16:15), but during that time he wiped out the family of Baasha and fulfilled the prophecy of Jehu (16:1-4).

The army revolted and appointed Omri the new king. He in turn marched against Zimri, who set fire to the palace and committed suicide by perishing in the blaze.

Omri ruled for twelve years (after putting down a brief revolt of the people) and led the people into

further sin. His only claim to fame was the establishing of Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom.

Upon his death, his son **Ahab** came to the throne, and under his leadership the tribes declined further into idolatry and sin.

Ahab was married to Jezebel, and this brought Baal worship officially into the kingdom.

When the nation was moving into idolatry that God called His prophets forth to preach to the people. We have met an anonymous prophet in chapter 13, and we will yet meet Elijah and Elisha. Of course, Jehu and Ahijah should also be mentioned.

When God's people sin, it is only the Word of God proclaimed by the servants of God that can call them back and save them.

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

When godly kings were ruling, God blessed His people; when ungodly men reigned, God sent judgment and defeat. How tragic it is to see this great nation, called by the Lord, now declining in spiritual things and turning away from the truth.

Yes, they often had material prosperity, but this was no sign that God was pleased with their deeds. In fact, the lust for material things often led the people farther from God.

The best way to build a godly nation is to have godly citizens in godly churches (1 Tim. 2:1-6).