

# I & II Kings



## Lesson 4 – Chapters 12:1–16:34

### The Divided Kingdom

Early in his reign, David ruled one-half of a divided Israel. The men of Judah made David their king upon the death of Saul, while the Northern Kingdom united under Saul's son, Ish-bosheth (2 Samuel 2:1–10). The split between the two kingdoms persisted for seven and a half years (2 Samuel 2:11), with David ruling Judah in the south, and Ish-bosheth, Israel in the north. The assassination of Ish-bosheth drew the northern tribes to approach David to make him king over a unified Israel (2 Samuel 5:1–5). Altogether, David reigned over the unified kingdom for thirty-three years, after which Solomon succeeded him to the throne.

For an additional forty years, Israel remained intact under Solomon (1 Kings 11:42). At his death, relations, already strained by forced labor and high taxation, offered a perfect storm destined to separate what David had united eighty years earlier. In our previous lesson, we learned how God raised up men against Solomon. These he used to return Solomon to the path he once walked in faith (1 Kings 11:9–10). Ultimately, Solomon abandoned the Lord completely, separating from Him through the misguidance of foreign women. Solomon separated himself from God, not the other way around: Woe to the culture that abandons God and believes in its heart that it will not suffer the consequences of its actions. Solomon would not live to see the consequences. God spared him that because of His promise to David (1 Kings 11:12), but Israel would soon pull apart like Ahijah's new garment (1 Kings 11:30).

### A Bloodless Coup

Read 1 Kings 12:1–24. With the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam traveled the thirty or so miles to Shechem for his coronation as king. Generations earlier, Joshua had assembled Israel there for a covenant renewal ceremony that featured Joshua's well-known pledge, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). In contrast, Rehoboam had come to Shechem not to serve but to be served. The men of the Northern Kingdom asked Jeroboam, a former administrator under Solomon, to serve as their representative (1 Kings 12:3). He appealed to Rehoboam to lighten the labor and tax burden placed on them by Solomon (v. 4). Rehoboam's reply smacked of self-importance: "Solomon's hand was strong with the lash, but not as strong as mine." In response, the Northern Kingdom, united with Judah during David's reign, went its separate way and made Jeroboam king. Only the tribe of Judah remained faithful to King Rehoboam (v. 20).

35. How does this incident prove that God is in control of history?
36. How does this incident show God's faithfulness to His promise to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:30–33; 12:15)?

### **Jeroboam's Wickedness**

Read 1 Kings 12:25–33. Rehoboam escaped with his life to Jerusalem, while Jeroboam claimed Shechem as his capitol “and lived there” (v. 25). He built Penuel, located east of the Jordan River.

37. Jeroboam found something he thought might prevent Israel from uniting their hearts behind him as king. What did he find and how did he deal with this matter (vv. 26–28)?
38. How do you think God viewed Jeroboam's actions? Consider the making of two golden calves, the date change for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the forbidding of worship in Jerusalem (vv. 28–33) as you develop your answer.

### **God's Grace through Prophets**

Read 1 Kings 13:1–14:20. Jeroboam turned Israel's hearts from God, yet God graciously pursued Jeroboam by sending prophets to decry Jeroboam's actions. Verses 2 and 3 record a prophecy fulfilled three hundred years later (2 Kings 23:15–16).

39. When God shriveled Jeroboam's hand and tore down his altar, to whom did Jeroboam turn (13:6)?
40. What lasting effect did the man of God's witness have on Jeroboam (13:33–34)?
41. God used a second prophet, Ahijah, to condemn Jeroboam. How did Ahijah compare Jeroboam to David (14:8)? Of what sins did God condemn Jeroboam, and what consequences befell him?
42. Take a moment to note the connection between the nation of Israel and the faithlessness of her king (14:16). Do you think that national leaders today can affect a nation's spiritual health?

### **Rehoboam's Reign in Judah**

Read 1 Kings 14:21–31. For eleven short verses, our writer visits the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

43. Summarize Rehoboam's reign as described in verses 22–24.
44. What happened to Solomon's temple during Rehoboam's reign (vv. 25–28)?

## Other Kings in Judah and Israel

Read 1 Kings 15:1–16:34. Upon the deaths of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, other kings took the throne. In Judah, a son and grandson succeeded Rehoboam. In Israel, Jeroboam's son reigned for two years before an assassin killed him.

45. Compare and contrast the reigns of Abijam and Asa of Judah using verses 15:3, 11.
46. Conspiracy and murder mar the succession of kings in Israel, yet a central theme emerges in 15:26, 34 and 16:25, 30. What theme does our writer present to us?

## God's Word for Today

Ungodly government brings with it the withdrawal of God's blessings and a downward spiral of wantonness and corruption.

47. God does not make dramatic appearances in our lives as He did in Jeroboam's. However, He continually calls us to repentance and faith through His Word. Explain the assurance of forgiveness God offers you in 1 John 1:9.
48. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14. These verses carry us back to Solomon and the dedication of the Lord's temple. Apply these words to society today.

## In Closing

- † Research the life of King Ahab by consulting a Bible dictionary or other resource.
- † Discuss how God uses the prophet Elijah to confront King Ahab in his sin.
- † Read **1 Kings 17:1–22:40** to prepare for the next session