

# THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

**Recommended Reading:** 1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings

**Corresponds to Workbook** pp 91-108

## Summary:

Solomon's son alienates his subjects, and the Kingdom divides into two: the northern kingdom of ten tribes, and the southern kingdom of two tribes (Judah and Benjamin). The kings of the north all proved to be evil with the exception of a few, with nine coups and assassinations and dynasty changes, while the kings of the South were a mixture of good and evil, but all of the dynasty of King David. Eventually both sectors of the Kingdom are sent into exile: the North, in 722 BC by the Assyrians, and the South some three hundred years later by the Babylonians in 587 BC. Throughout this period of rampant disobedience and forsaking the covenant, God is patient with His people by sending prophets and chastisement, but ultimately the people must face the consequences of their choices.

## 1 Kings 11

The story of Jeroboam begins in 1 Kings 11. Who was he, and how was he selected by Solomon for an important post in 1 Kings 11:26-28? \_\_\_\_\_

What surprising prophecy did the prophet Ahijah share with Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:31-41? Where did Jeroboam flee? What event would cause him to return and take charge of the ten northern tribes, who henceforth would be called "Israel"? \_\_\_\_\_

*Note:* This is a pivotal moment in Jewish history. The kingdom would be divided from this point onward!

## 1 Kings 12

King David's grandson Rehoboam causes what irreparable division as soon as he ascends the throne of his father Solomon? How might this crisis have been avoided? \_\_\_\_\_

Rehoboam acted with arrogant pride. When have you mishandled people, evoking unnecessary conflict? How much of your own woes this past week were caused by none other than yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

When you are searching for spiritual direction, to whom do you turn—the godly, who will tell the truth regardless of cost—or those you know who might agree with your questionable position? \_\_\_\_\_

How and why did Jeroboam lead the northern tribes into apostasy and religious rebellion? 1 Kings 12: 26-33 \_\_\_\_\_

Dan and Bethel will serve as the primary sites of worship for the northern kingdom going forward, with Jerusalem the legitimate center of worship in the South.

Keep in mind that Jeroboam hails from the tribe of Ephraim, son of Joseph by an Egyptian wife in the time of the Patriarch. This return to Egyptian deities and worship of not one but now two golden calves makes what Moses had to deal with at the foot of Mt Sinai look small! How is the religious split brought about by Jeroboam, reminiscent of Exodus 32:1-5, more serious than even the permanent political division? \_\_\_\_\_

---

What was God's response to the house of Jeroboam? 1 Kings 14:9-16 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

### 1 Kings 13

The unnamed prophet from Judah curses the altar, indicting the audacity of King Jeroboam in establishing his own feasts and officiating unlawfully as a priest. He predicts that (in 300 years) King Josiah will put such practices aright (2 Kings 23:15-18).

*Sirach 15:14-17*- "When God, in the beginning, created man, he made him subject to his own free choice. If you choose you can keep the commandments; it is loyalty to do his will. There are set before you fire and water; to whichever you choose, *stretch forth your hand*. Before man are life and death, whichever he chooses shall be given him."

Why would God restore evil Jeroboam's hand? Keep in mind that King Jeroboam had led the entire northern ten tribes into serious apostasy, setting up a rival worship centers and two golden calves, a priesthood drawing from any men of any tribes (not Levitical), and worse. Here he is reaching out to seize a prophet who is warning him of God's displeasure, when his hand becomes paralyzed. \_\_\_\_\_

---

(Jeroboam's withering hand is referenced in Psalm 137:5).

This same question resurfaces when Jonah is puzzled why God would care about the Assyrians, the Jews' arch enemy? Why would Jesus save you? What does this tell you about the nature and character of God? \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Geographical Note*: Jeroboam is a member of the tribe of Ephraim, the largest of the ten northern tribes, and it is natural for him to establish his capital at Shechem, located in the hill country of Ephraim. The capital will later be moved to Samaria by King Omri.

### The Rise of the Prophets

"The apostasy of Israel inaugurates in earnest the period of the prophets in the life of Israel. Prophets and wise men were always to be found in ancient Israel in one form or another, but with the rise of unfaithful kings, *God raises up a continual stream of prophets to act as a*

check and to call the people back to covenant faithfulness—which is the primary role of a prophet. The Hebrew prophets warn of judgment for infidelity but also give hope of a restoration. They not only pronounce their word, they often also embody that word through action, and these words and deeds are mutually interpretative. For example, the prophet Hosea delivers a message that Israel has been an unfaithful bride, a harlot, to God her Husband. Then to embody God’s betrayed heart, a heart that continues to hold out unconditional love to Israel, Hosea is commanded to marry a prostitute, who will be unfaithful to him just as Israel has been unfaithful to God.”<sup>1</sup>

Did all of the above events cause King Jeroboam to pause and change course? 1 Kings 13:33-34 \_\_\_\_\_

When have you persisted in sin? \_\_\_\_\_

“What angers and offends God, more than sin itself, is that sinners show no sorrow for their sins” (St John Chrysostom).<sup>2</sup>

### 1 Kings 14

According to 1 Kings 14:10, will God deal with evil? \_\_\_\_\_  
His justice may seem slow, but it is sure!

What grim message does Jeroboam’s wife receive from the now blind and elderly prophet Ahijah? \_\_\_\_\_

It is impossible to deceive God, who knows all things, and the blind prophet correctly identifies the disguised queen before she even crosses his threshold. God states his charge against Jeroboam without mincing words: “You have cast me behind your back” (1 Kings 14:9). The king will not only experience personal consequences for his behavior; idolatrous infidelity is given as reason for the future exile of the entire nation as well (1 Kings 14:15).

**Northern Kingdom: Summary looking ahead:** Jeroboam’s son Nadab was assassinated after two years, fulfilling 1 Kings 14:10. Baasha then meets a violent death, and his son reigned only briefly. Then Omri seized power and established the longest dynasty of the northern kingdom, establishing Samaria as his capital. Omri’s son Ahab married the Canaanite princess Jezebel and became the most morally corrupt king of all.

While spiritual decay is proceeding at an alarming rate in the north, was the situation in the south much better? 1 Kings 14:22-24 \_\_\_\_\_

*Hint:* Throughout the remaining portion of 1 and 2 Kings, there will frequently be this narrative swing between the kings of the north and south. Stay alert! Are you reading about the North (Israel) or South (Judah)-and the moral conduct of the king?

---

<sup>1</sup> Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. (c) 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 168.

<sup>2</sup> *The Navarre Bible: Joshua-Kings*. Second edition (c) 2004 by Scepter Publishers, New York, NY, pp 474.

## 1 Kings 15

King Abijam's son Asa assumed the throne in Judah and reestablished faithful practice, in the midst of increasing hostilities and war between the north and south. "Asa is the first king of Judah after David to be given praise for his religious observance, despite his not taking away the high places. Similar credit is given to five other kings of Judah (Jehosphaphat in 22:43-44; Jehoash in 2 Kings 12:3-4; Amaziah in 2 Kings 14:3-4; Azariah in 2 Kings 15:3-4; and Jotham in 2 Kings 15:34-35) prior to the great reform carried out by Hezekiah that got rid of all idolatrous centers of worship. The commitment of these kings to the Lord is a sign that the house of David continues to hold the divine promise of producing the Messiah (2 Sam 7:14)."<sup>3</sup>

What difficult decision did Asa, King of Judah, make with respect to his mother, in 1 Kings 15:13? \_\_\_\_\_

"Asa, King of Judah, struggled to honor God in the midst of an evil people. But evil hit close to home when Asa's mother, Maacah, made an offensive idol and bowed down to it. Asa had a choice—honor God or honor his mother. Asa chose to honor God by cutting his mother's idol into pieces and burning it. But he didn't stop there. Asa also took away her title, 'queen mother,' and all the privileges that came with it.... God commands his people to love their families. But at times Christians must distance themselves, especially when family members' actions consistently and directly contradict God's Word. Our first allegiance is to God."<sup>4</sup>

## 1 Kings 16

Chaos and coups ensue in the north until the dynasty of Omri is established. Politically, Omri's rule was significant in that he established Samaria as the capital, conquered the Moabites (2 Kings 3:1-27), established important alliances with such powers as Assyria, but "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 16:25).

**1 Kings Chapters 16-22** will be covered in the next lesson where the prophet Elijah contends with Omri's evil son Ahab and despicable Canaanite wife Jezebel.

## 2 Kings 6

2 Kings 6:8-23 gives a glimpse into the hidden forces of spiritual warfare and divine protection. The prophet Elisha (who followed Elijah as THE prophet of Israel) would warn the King of Israel, through divine word of knowledge, where the King of Aram was going to raid next. Finally, the frustrated King of Aram decides to capture Elisha and sends out a "strong force with horses and chariots by night" (2 Kings 6:13-14). What happens next? Why is Elisha's servant so terrified? Why is Elisha so unconcerned? 2 Kings 6:15-17 \_\_\_\_\_

What does Elisha do to the enemy forces? How do they end up in Samaria? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> *The Navarre Bible: Joshua-Kings*. Second Edition: (c) 2004 by Scepter Publishers, New York, NY, pp 481.

<sup>4</sup> Swindoll, Charles. *Insight's Bible Application Guide: Joshua-Esther*. (c) 2013 by Insight for Living Publishing House, Plano, TX, pp 93.

How does Elisha advise the King to treat them? How does this predate Jesus' teaching on how to treat one's enemies? \_\_\_\_\_  
Are you as gracious and kind in dealing with others? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Case Study of Jezebel, Wicked Queen of the North**

If it was a contest, it is one you would not want to win. Scripture briefly describes King Ahab as the WORST king the northern tribes/Israel ever had--- and that is no small trophy. Just consider who had gone before him: Jeroboam led the North into complete false worship and apostasy; Elah would not remember much of his reign anyhow, as he was drunk most of the time; Omri, Ahab's father, had been called the most wicked king yet (until his weak son, bossed around by evil Queen Jezebel, took the throne).

From the earliest times of Abraham, God had instructed His people not only WHO to worship but HOW to worship. Queen Jezebel brings in yet more idolatrous worship, as she was the daughter of the Canaanite king Ethbaal (whose very name means "man of Baal"). But even more egregious than promoting false religion in Israel, they actively persecuted the prophets of Jehovah, so that they had to flee to caves, in secret hiding. (We shall cover the dramatic showdown between Elijah and Jezebel's Baal prophets at Mount Carmel in the next lesson on Elijah). Jezebel was at the root of Israel choosing the very gods of the people the Jews were to dispossess - and responsible for killing every prophet of God she could get her hands on. Times were as bad as they had ever been.

According to 1 Kings 21:25-26, who was responsible in large part for King Ahab's dismal record? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you act as a stumbling block in any way to your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

After Jezebel stole Naboth's vineyard for covetous, whining Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-16), God gave Elijah the unenviable task of confronting Ahab with what serious prophecy of consequences? 1 Kings 21:17-26 \_\_\_\_\_

What was Ahab's surprising response? 1 Kings 21:27-29 \_\_\_\_\_

"It is difficult here to determine what is more amazing, that the wicked King Ahab would ever repent, or that God would relent of His judgment because of it. The fact that a wicked person like Ahab can repent and find mercy with the Lord is astonishing. Remember, 'there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil' (1 Kings 21:21-25). What better proof do we need to proclaim that no prodigal is beyond the reach of the Lord's loving-kindness if he is willing to humble himself."<sup>5</sup>

"In 722 BC the fast-growing empire of Assyria (not to be confused with the neighboring kingdom of Syria) took the capital Samaria and conquered Israel. So as to avoid any

<sup>5</sup> Barber, Wayne. *Following God: Life Principles from the Women of the Bible: Book Two*. (c) AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, pp 125.

insurgencies and rebellion in Israel, Assyria removed many of the surviving Israelites, scattering them among the vast Assyrian empire; and at the same time, they brought five other pagan tribes and relocated them in the land of Samaria (Israel). These pagan tribes will intermarry with the few remaining Israelites, and the people resulting from this intermarriage will become known as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17)."<sup>6</sup>

## 2 Kings 18

How does King Hezekiah represent the high point of Judah's kings in 2 Kings 18:6? How do you find solace and courage in "clinging to the Lord"? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the story of how Hezekiah handled the Assyrian threat at his doorstep give insight into how to handle your own crisis of the day? Review 1 Kings Chapters 18-19, particularly 2 Kings 19:14-19. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Kings 21

Hezekiah's son Manasseh "undoes all the good of Hezekiah. Not only does he restore the altars of Baal, he worships the stars and builds pagan altars in the Temple. He sacrifices his son to Moloch, practices sorcery, and consults mediums. In 2 Kings 21, we learn that he does more evil than the Amorites before him, even killing many innocent people, and he leads Judah into sin. Judah by this time has a long history of swinging in and out of devotion to God. The sins of Manasseh anger God to the point of declaring an end to the kingdom. He will 'cast off the remnant of his heritage (v 14). Not forever, but he will give them over to the covenant curses they have brought upon themselves with their sin.

The prophet **Isaiah** tells King Hezekiah how God will deal with the sins of the Southern Kingdom. 2 Kings 20:16-18 states that woe will come to all of them until the land is utterly forsaken. Isaiah speaks of ruin and desolation, of exile and death. To Hezekiah, he says the people will be carried into captivity into Babylon. Yet, there is hope. God does not forget those he loves. A remnant of the people, a 'stump,' will remain, out of which the nation will grow again.... The South lasted nearly 350 years, most of them under good kings, primarily because God upheld the Davidic throne. But both kingdoms ended in apostasy and destruction."<sup>7</sup>

What lessons do you glean from the story of good King Hezekiah and his evil son Manasseh, who reigns for 55 years and seals Judah's fate? \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Kings 22:11

<sup>6</sup> Cavins. *Walking with God*, pp 177.

<sup>7</sup> Cavins, Jeff. *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation: Workbook*. (c) 2019 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 233-234.

King Josiah wept when a copy of the Torah is discovered in the disheveled Temple. Does Scripture ever cause you anguish when you realize what God has put up with in your (often oblivious) sinfulness? \_\_\_\_\_

“The best guide you can find to the correct path is the serious study of the Bible. There we can find rules for the conduct of our life and.....each person can concentrate on the area where they feel themselves to be lacking and find, as in a hospital, a cure for their particular trouble (St Basil the Great).”<sup>8</sup>

“Where we see sin, God sees pain; and He wishes to heal us, refresh us, and free us” - (Fr Eamonn Burke).<sup>9</sup>

### **2 Kings 23**

Josiah, King of Judah, led a great revival and was a godly ruler. How is his relationship to the Lord described in 2 Kings 23:25? \_\_\_\_\_

### **2 Kings 25**

What rising world power captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple and palace of the southern kingdom? 2 Kings 25:1, 21 \_\_\_\_\_

What is the dismal end of Judah as represented by the plight of King Zedekiah? What happens to him just before he is exiled to Babylon? How is he fittingly a blind king for a blind people? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you exclusively devoted to God? “The kings in this period were judged entirely on their spiritual health. Eventually, we will all be judged this way. Our impressive resumes will mean nothing; our perfectly decorated homes will be ignored... How would you live differently if you truly believed that your spiritual health was the most important aspect of your life? How would you prioritize your life if you really understood that nothing but your walk with God really mattered?”<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

Where were the people of Judah taken into exile? 2 Kings 24:14-15; 25:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Who were permitted to stay in the land of Judah? 2 Kings 25:12 \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Catholic Wisdom*, Accessed on-line January 7, 2022 from [yourfriends@catholic.wisdom.org](mailto:yourfriends@catholic.wisdom.org).

<sup>9</sup> Burke, Fr Eamonn. From his book *Make Your Home In Me: Reflections in Prayer*, quoted by *Daily Catholic Wisdom*, accessed on-line Jan 18, 2022 from [yourfriends@catholic.wisdom.org](mailto:yourfriends@catholic.wisdom.org).

<sup>10</sup> Seabolt, Camilla. *Community Bible Study: The Divided Kingdom and the Minor Prophets. Volume 1: Lessons 1-15.* (c) 2009 by Community Bible Study, Colorado Springs, CO, pp 2-3.

“With Zedekiah’s defeat on the plains of Jericho, the story of Judah, and all Israel, in the land comes full circle. The story began with Joshua leading Israel onto the plains of Jericho, where they would win a great victory through prayer and trust in God. But Zedekiah is no Joshua, and by ignoring the word of God, he and his people lose the land promised long ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Every step the surviving Jews make on their long march east to Babylon puts the story of salvation in reverse. They travel the same road that Abraham took the story of salvation in reverse. They travel the same road that Abraham took from Ur of the Chaldeans. But now with each step they move further away from the Promised Land and closer to the place where Israel’s story first began. All of Israel’s achievements, beginning with the call of Abraham, to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David, now seem lost as Judah finds itself in the ancient homeland of Abraham, slaves in the midst of the plains of Shinar in the kingdom of Babel.”<sup>11</sup>

In what ways have your sins naturally led to an exile from God? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Jesus capture this sense of exile in the Parable of the Prodigal Son? Luke 15:11-32 \_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion:**

“The books of Kings tell the story of Israel from the accession of Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem—that is, from the highest point in Israel’s history (the dedication of the Temple under Solomon) to its lowest point (the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian Exile). Despite the constant ministry of God’s prophets, the royal sponsorship of illegitimate worship leads first to the division and ultimately to the destruction of the kingdom of David. Neither the royal son of David, the Temple itself, nor even the ministry of the prophets is able to prevent the dissolution of the people of Israel. Nonetheless, this final chapter of the great ‘primary history’ (Genesis-2 Kings) does not end without hope. The last reigning son of David, Jehoiachin, receives mercy at the end of his life, a sign that God has not forgotten his covenant with David and may yet send a royal son ‘greater than Solomon’ (Mt 12:42) who will rebuild the Temple (John 2:19-21) and complete the prophetic ministry of Elijah and Elisha (Luke 7:16).”<sup>12</sup>

**(c) Glenda Canfield, January 2022.**

<sup>11</sup> Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. (c) 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 188.

<sup>12</sup> Bergsma, John and Brant Pitre. *The Old Testament: A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*. (c) 2018 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 429.