

1 Kings 12 - The Divided Kingdom; Israel Rebels Against Rehoboam; Jeroboam's Gold Calves

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

- (1) The division of the kingdom (12:1-24)
 - (A) Jeroboam asked Rehoboam to cut taxes (12:1-4)
 - (B) After deliberation Rehoboam sided with the younger men rather than the older men in raising taxes (12:5-15)
 - (C) The other tribes split from Judah and enthroned Jeroboam (12:16-24)
- (2) Jeroboam's reign in the North (1 Kings 12:25—14:20)
 - (A) In order to prevent the Northerners from returning to Jerusalem Jeroboam established alternative worship centers in Dan and Bethel (12:25-33)

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

The division of David and Solomon's United Kingdom into two often hostile nations was truly one of history's turning points. During this era of 209 years (931-722 BC) the two kingdoms experienced differing relations with one another. For 57 years (931-874 BC) they were antagonistic (12:1—16:28). Then for the next 33 years (874-841 BC) they were allies (1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 9:29). Then renewed antagonism erupted and continued for the final 119 years (841-722 BC; 2 Kings 9:30—17:41).

In looking at the text which describes the division, we sense the spiritual apostasy which was part and parcel of the founding of the Northern realm, Israel. In the entire history of the North, there is no godly king. In the history of the South, a kingdom known as Judah, there were only a few. Yet the kings in the Southern line were all descendants of David, for God's covenant-promise to Israel's greatest king was faithfully kept. This era marks development of the prophetic ministry. Increasingly, prophets played a role in speaking out about the sins of the nation, and in calling God's people back to the Lord. Both North and South knew the ministry of these "men of God."

Throughout this history the writer's purpose continued to be what it had been: to demonstrate that failure to honor the Mosaic Covenant brings ruin and destruction, but obedience brings blessing. This is clear from the material he chose to record. While he

gave a basic historical record of the period, he departed often from official matters to record events that have theological and practical significance. He also gave more information about the Northern Kingdom of Israel than he did about the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The reverse emphasis appears in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

It is interesting that there were also 40 kings in the two kingdoms. Forty kings and 40 prophets. It is as though God was testing His people to see if they would remain faithful to him. They failed this time of testing, and God sent them into captivity.

Dates of the Rulers of Judah and Israel

Adapted from Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 75.

Judah		Israel	
Rehoboam	930-913	<i>Jeroboam I</i>	930-909
Abijah	913-910	Nadab	909-908
Asa	910-869	<i>Baasha</i>	908-886
Jehoshaphat, coregency with Asa	872-869	Eiah	886-885
Jehoshaphat, total reign	872-848	<i>Zimri</i>	885
Jehoram, coregency with Jehoshaphat	853-848	Tibni	885-880
Jehoram, total reign	853-841	<i>Omri</i> , overlap with Tibni	885-874
Ahaziah	841	Ahab	874-853
Athaliah	841-835	Ahaziah	853-852
Jehoash	835-796	Jehoram	852-841
Amaziah	796-767	<i>Jehu</i>	841-814
Azariah, overlap with Amaziah	792-767	Jehoahaz	814-798
Azariah, total reign	792-740	Joash	798-782
Jotham, coregency with Azariah	750-740	Jeroboam II, coregency with Jehoash	793-782
Jotham, official reign	750-735	Jeroboam II, total reign	793-753
Jotham, total years	750-732	Zechariah	753
Ahaz, overlap with Jotham	735-732	<i>Shallum</i>	752
Ahaz, official years	732-715	<i>Menahem</i> , overlap with Pekah	752-742
Hezekiah	715-686	Pekah, overlap with Menahem and Pekahiah	752-732
Manasseh, coregency	697-686	Pekahiah, overlap with Pekah	742-740
Manasseh, total reign	697-642	<i>Hosea</i>	732-723
Amon	642-640		
Josiah	640-609		
Jehoahaz	609		
Jehoiakim	609-598		
Jehoiachin	598-597		
Zedekiah	597-586		

The rulers in italics above began new dynasties.

1 Kings 12

(1) The division of the kingdom (12:1-24)

(A) Jeroboam asked Rehoboam to cut taxes (12:1-4) (Cf. 2 Chr 10:1-11:4)

1 Then **Rehoboam** went to Shechem, because all Israel had come to **Shechem** to make him king.

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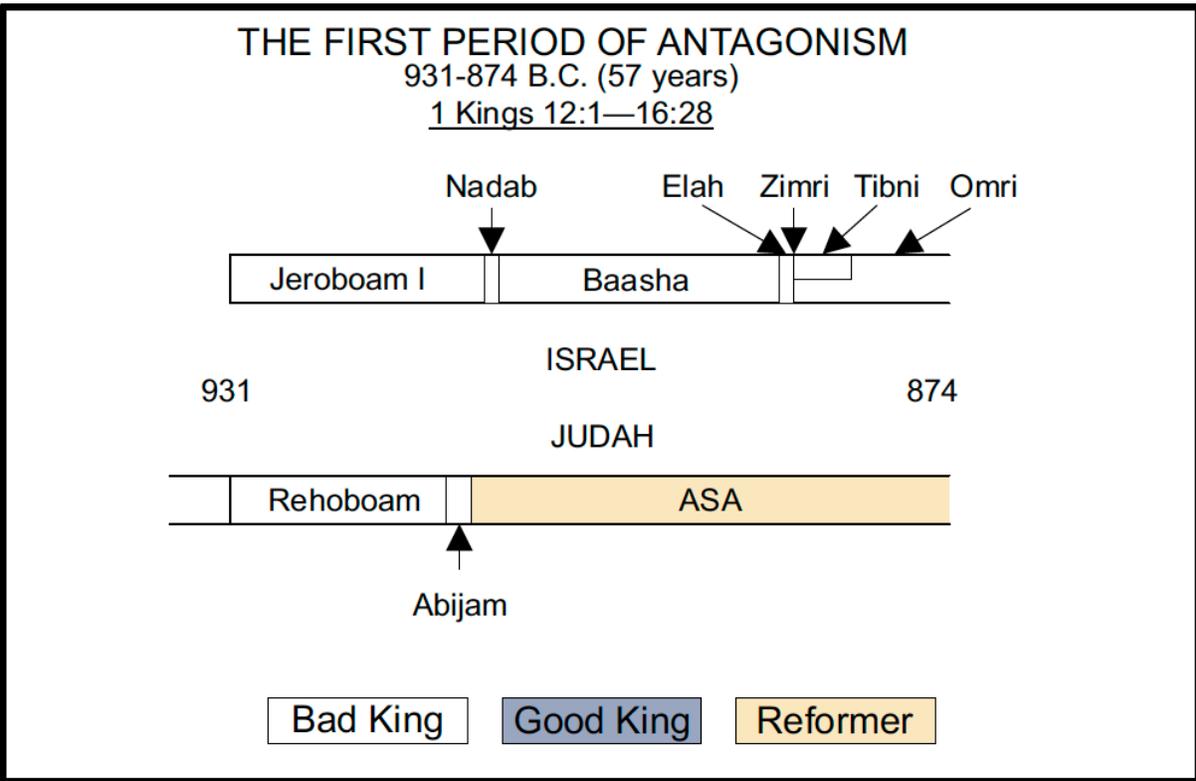
1 Rehoboam traveled to Shechem because all of Israel went there to install him as king.

1 And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

- "...Rehoboam" - the only son of Solomon mentioned in Scripture, had doubtless been appointed by his father to succeed him

- "...Shechem" - a fitting site for the coronation of a king of Israel (although Jerusalem was the natural coronation site):

- At Shechem, *Yahweh* first appeared to Abraham in the land and promised to give him all of Canaan; it was the site the covenant was received and renewed (Cf. Gen 12:6-7; 33:18-20; Joshua 8; 24)
- Jacob later settled there (Gen 33:18-20) and Joseph was buried there (Joshua 24:32)
- After they had entered the Promised Land the Israelites, at Shechem in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, dedicated themselves to keep the Mosaic Law (Joshua 24:1-27)
- This sacred spot now reminded the Israelites of their divinely revealed destiny as a nation and of God's faithfulness



2 Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *about this*, he was living in Egypt (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon).

2 Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *of it*, he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon).

2 Nebat's son Jeroboam heard about it while he was still in Egypt, where he had fled to get away from King Solomon. Jeroboam returned from Egypt

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)

- Though Solomon must have had many sons, none is mentioned except Rehoboam, whom he begot by Naamah the Ammonitess (Cf. 14:21)

3 Then they sent *word* and summoned him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

3 Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

3 after being summoned. When Jeroboam and the entire assembly of Israel arrived, they spoke to Rehoboam,

3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

- Jeroboam was formerly the foreman of labor in Ephraim, in which Shechem was located. When he heard that Solomon had died, he returned from Egypt where he had fled from Solomon sometime previously (Cf. 11:26-28,40).

— By popular demand, Jeroboam headed a delegation which appealed to Rehoboam to lighten their load of labor and taxation (Cf. 2 Chr 10:3-4)

— Jeroboam had, of course, been told by the Prophet Ahijah that the kingdom would be divided and that he would rule 10 of the tribes (11:31-39). But he seems to have decided to let events take their course rather than initiating an unprovoked revolution.

4 "Your father made our **yoke** hard; but now, lighten the hard labor *imposed by* your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

4 "Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

4 "Your father made our burdens unbearable. Therefore lighten your father's requirements and his heavy burdens that he placed on us, and we'll serve you."

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

- "...yoke" - Solomon had imposed heavy taxation, forced labor and other burdens on the Israelites

Solomon's method of governing was oppression. He taxed the people greatly and conscripted them into government service. The result was material magnificence. He multiplied riches and manifested great displays in the temple, the palace, and throughout his kingdom. He increased the military strength of the nation. Nevertheless in the process, he ground down the people. He kept them under his thumb. The state became more important than the people. The result was dissatisfaction with Solomon's method of government.

In reaction to this method, Rehoboam, in the south, chose a new method of government: autocracy. He decided to tighten his grip on the people so that he could control them (v14).

He believed the people should trust in their rulers, but he did not trust in God.

Consequently, he failed. Autocracy led to revolution (v16).

Jeroboam, in the north, chose a third method of government: democracy. He let the people determine how they would live. While this resulted in more pleasant conditions for the people, it also resulted in ultimate disaster for his nation. Notice what democracy produced in Jeroboam's day: idolatry (v27-29). People cannot rule themselves effectively. We need God to govern us. Jeroboam believed rulers should trust in the people, but he, like Rehoboam, did not trust in God, either. Consequently, he failed. He made religion convenient, and the people became corrupt (v30-31).

Rehoboam's successors in Judah chose a method of government that we could call government by policy. That is, they chose to follow precedent, the pattern of their predecessors, rather than getting and following God's direction for their nation. There were some exceptions to this approach, but on the whole this was Judah's method of government.

Jeroboam's successors in Israel, however, chose a different method of government: selfishness. The kings of Israel cared little for the people of Israel. What concerned them primarily was what they could get for themselves out of being king. That is why the story of the kingdom of Israel is a story of intrigue, assassinations, and much bloodshed.

In summary, every form of human government results in disastrous failure if people do not acknowledge God's sovereignty. People cannot govern themselves effectively. The result is always decline, disruption, and disintegration. This is one of the great revelations of 1 Kings. The message of the book, therefore, is that when people exclude God, every method of human government will fail. Nonetheless, God is still on His throne and is in control.

(B) After deliberation Rehoboam sided with the younger men rather than the older men in raising taxes (12:5-15)

5 Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.

5 Then he said to them, "Depart for three days, then return to me." So the people departed.

5 "Come again in three days," Rehoboam told them. So the people left

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

- Asking for three days to consider the matter, Rehoboam consulted with the old advisers of his father, who counseled him to listen to the Israelites

— By reducing the tax load and by lightening the labor conscription requirements on his people, King Rehoboam could have won the support of his petitioners, but he said that he

wanted three days to think about their suggestion.

6 And King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise *me* to answer this people?"

6 King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?"

6 while King Rehoboam conferred with his advisors who had worked for his father Solomon during his administration. He asked them, "What is your advice as to how I should respond to these people?"

6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

- Rehoboam's response to the request of the Israelites (to lighten their load, v4) was the same as Pharaoh's: he consulted with his counselors and then refused to ease their burden, but increased it

7 Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their request, and speak pleasant words to them, then they will be your servants always."

7 Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

7 They advised him, "If today you are a servant, you will serve this people by answering them and speaking kindly to them. Then they will serve you forever."

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

- The king asked two groups of counselors for their advice. The elders were probably about the same age as his father Solomon, having served as the former king's official advisers; they were elders both by reason of years and by their office in the government.

— This group's counsel was wise—to lighten the tax and work load, as the people asked. If taken, this advice would have resulted in peace, at least for a time.

8 But he ignored the advice of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and served him.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.

8 But Rehoboam ignored the counsel that his elder advisors had given him. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him and who worked for him.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

9 He said to them, "What advice do you give, so that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"

9 So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'"

9 As a result, he asked them, "What's your advice so that we can give an answer to these people who have asked me, 'Please lighten the burden that your father put on us.?'"

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

- Rehoboam's choice was whether he would regard himself as the people's servant under Yahweh's authority, as David and Solomon had done, or as the supreme authority in Israel, as Saul had done. His pride led to his downfall.

10 And the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "This is what you should say to this people who spoke to you, saying: 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' You should speak this way to them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist!'"

10 The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins!'"

10 "This is what you should tell these people who asked you 'Your father made our burden heavy, but you must make it lighter for us!'" the young men who grew up with Rehoboam replied. "Tell them, 'My little finger will be thicker than my father's whole body!'"

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

- The younger men's counsel was the opposite from what the elders had given, but just what Rehoboam wanted to hear

— The wording of Rehoboam's reply to his petitioners, as suggested by his younger advisers, seems almost designed to provoke hostility: he would be far more harsh than his father, for his little finger was thicker than his father's waist (an obvious hyperbole intended to express his greater power)

11 Now then, my father loaded you with a heavy yoke; yet I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with **whips**, but I will discipline you with **scorpions!**"

11 Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

11 Not only that, but since my father loaded you down heavily, I'm going to add to that burden. My father disciplined you with whips, but I'm going to discipline you with scorpions!"

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

- "...whips" - plain leather straps

- "...scorpions" - a particularly cruel type of whip that contained sharp pieces of metal; it was used in the castigation of slaves

— Because of the contrast with whips in this verse, it's clear that animal scorpions are not meant here

- The king was no child at this time; he was 41 years old (14:21). Nor was his decision made on the spur of the moment; he had three days to think it over (v5). It was a deliberate choice possibly based on what he believed was needed most in the nation at that time.

— Perhaps the king and his counselors thought intimidation would send the potential rebels scurrying for cover and would drive any ideas of insurrection far from their minds.

12 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

12 Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

12 So Jeroboam and all the people went back to Rehoboam on the third day, just as they had been directed when the king said, "Come back again in three days."

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people harshly, for he ignored the advice of the elders which they had given him,

13 The king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him,

13 But the king gave the people a harsh response, because he was ignoring the counsel that his elders had given him.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

14 and he spoke to them according to the advice 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!"

14 and he spoke to them according to the advice 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."

14 Instead, Rehoboam spoke to them along the lines of what the younger men suggested. He told them, "My father burdened you heavily, but I will add to that burden. If my father disciplined you with whips, I'm going to discipline you with scorpions!"

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

- The king followed through with his decision and delivered his insulting threat to his petitioners. Rather than listening to the people, Rehoboam put his own interests first.

15 So the king did not listen to the people; because it was a turn of events from the LORD, in order to establish His word which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

15 So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn *of events* from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

15 The king would not listen to the people, because the turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill his prediction that the LORD spoke by means of Ahijah the Shilonite to Nebat's son Jeroboam

15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

- Rehoboam's decision resulted in what God had predicted to Solomon (11:11-13), Ahijah, and Jeroboam (11:31-39)

(C) The other tribes split from Judah and enthroned Jeroboam (12:16-24)

16 When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people replied to the king, saying, "What share do we have in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse; **To your tents, Israel!** Now look after your own house, David!" So Israel went *away* to their tents.

16 When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!" So Israel departed to their tents.

16 When all of Israel saw that the king wasn't listening to them, the people responded to the king's message, "What's the point in following David? We have no inheritance in the

descendants of Jesse. Let's go home, Israel! David, take care of your own household!' So Israel left for home.

16 So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

- "...To your tents, Israel!" - the reply of the Israelites evidently had become a battle cry; it was used years earlier by Sheba who rebelled against David (2 Sam 20:1)

— With these words, they turned their backs on their heritage to seek out new paths with their newly chosen leader, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat

- Rehoboam's insensitivity to the Israelites' hardships extinguished any hope they may have entertained of economic recovery. His dictatorial threat alienated his suffering subjects. Then and there they seceded and broke the union of the 12 tribes. Thus the unity of the Davidic house was repudiated by the majority of Israel.

17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

17 But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

17 And so Rehoboam ruled over the Israelis who lived in the cities of Judah.

17 But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

- Rehoboam was only able to retain the support of one tribe: Judah (along with a very small tribe, Benjamin, v21)

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

18 King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was in charge of conscripted labor, but all of Israel stoned him to death, and King Rehoboam had to jump in his chariot and flee back in a hurry to Jerusalem.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

- What could have motivated Rehoboam to send Adoram, the personification of oppression (the foreman of forced labor) to meet with the rebels at that crucial moment?

— Perhaps Adoram was the best-qualified ambassador. Whatever the reason, Rehoboam's "wisdom" proved foolish again. Adoram died as the target of the rebels' wrath and Rehoboam barely escaped with his own life.

19 So Israel has broken with the house of David to this day.

19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

19 That's how Israel came to be in rebellion against David's dynasty to this day.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

- What should have been a glorious national celebration (v1) turned into a humiliating rout for Judah's new king who fled his own coronation to escape assassination by his infuriated subjects

— The writer noted that the Israelites were really rebelling against the house of David, God's appointed dynasty, which they did "unto this day" (i.e., the time this section of the book was written)

20 And it came about, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent *word* and called him to the assembly, and made him king over all Israel. None except the tribe of Judah alone followed the house of David.

20 It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

20 Now when all of Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent for him and invited him to visit their assembly, where they installed him as king over all of Israel. Nobody (with the sole exception of the tribe of Judah) would align with David's dynasty.

20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

- Rehoboam's coronation turned into Jeroboam's coronation. The people brought Jeroboam forward and made him king then and there.

— This action suggests that plotting had been involved in the rebellion. Only Judah (and Benjamin, v21) remained loyal to the ruler from David's house (dynasty).

21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

21 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

21 As soon as Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem, he assembled 180,000 elite soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, intending to attack the dynasty of Israel and restore the

kingdom to Solomon's son Rehoboam.

21 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

- Having failed to preserve unity through diplomacy, Rehoboam sought to restore it by force

— His pride led him further into trouble: he wanted to start a civil war to recapture the throne

— The tribe of Benjamin was Judah's immediate neighbor to the north. The capital city of Jerusalem lay almost on the Judah-Benjamin border. Probably for the sake of their close neighbors and the capital, the Benjamites sided with Judah at this point on (Cf. 2 Sam 19:16-17)

— Together these tribes called up 180,000 soldiers to fight their brothers in the 10 tribes to the north

22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the **man of God**, saying,

22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

22 But a message from God came to Shemaiah, a man of God:

22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

- "...man of God" - prophet (Cf. 13:18; 2 Kings 5:8; 2 Chr 12:5)

23 "Tell Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, saying,

23 "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying,

23 "Tell Solomon's son Rehoboam, king of Judah, all the dynasty of Judah, Benjamin, and the rest of the people,

23 Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

24 'This is what the LORD says: "You shall not go up nor fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return, every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.'" So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned to go *their way* in accordance with the word of the LORD.

24 'Thus says the LORD, "You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.'" So they listened

to the word of the LORD, and returned and went *their way* according to the word of the LORD.

24 'This is what the LORD says: "You are not to fight or even approach your fellow Israelis in battle. Every soldier is to return to his own home, because this development comes from me."'" So they listened to what the LORD had to say and returned home, just as the LORD had directed.

24 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

- The man of God made a public announcement that civil war was definitely not God's will and he convinced Rehoboam and the people to go back home

— To his credit Rehoboam obeyed the word of the LORD and did not proceed into battle. Again the writer pointed out the overruling hand of God in these affairs (as the LORD had ordered, v24; Cf. v15).

(2) Jeroboam's reign in the North (1 Kings 12:25—14:20)

Jeroboam was the first of 20 kings who ruled the Northern Kingdom during its 209-year history. He reigned for 22 years (931-910 BC). He could have been an instrument of blessing for Israel: he was divinely chosen and given promises that his dynasty would continue and prosper if he obeyed the Lord (11:38-39). But Jeroboam did not trust or obey the Lord; he committed many serious sins that resulted in the Israelites turning *from* God rather than *to* Him. He planted seeds that bore bitter fruit for Israel as long as it continued as a nation. Twenty kings ruled the Northern Kingdom and not one of them turned the people back to the Lord. Instead of one stable dynasty, Israel experienced several dynasties.

(A) In order to prevent the Northerners from returning to Jerusalem Jeroboam established alternative worship centers in Dan and Bethel (12:25-33)

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.

25 Later on, Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. He also expanded from there and built Penuel.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

- Jeroboam chose Shechem (where Rehoboam had been crowned, v1) as his capital and began at once to fortify it as his stronghold

— During its history the Northern Kingdom had three capitals: Shechem, Tirzah (14:17; 15:33), and Samaria (16:23-24)

— Jeroboam also built up Peniel as a fortress east of the Jordan River, probably to protect Israel from invasion from the east by the Gileadites, who had been consistently loyal to David.

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

26 Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

26 Jeroboam was thinking to himself, "The kingdom is about to return to David's control.

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

- This may be viewed as Jeroboam's first act of infidelity to Jehovah

— He had already been given assurance that the Lord would build him a sure house (Cf. xx:xx), but because he did not trust God's Word, he resorted to this measure of religious apostasy—the religious as well as political separation of the two kingdoms.

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

27 If these people keep going up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD there, the hearts of these people will return to their lord, King Rehoboam of Judah. Then they'll kill me and return to Rehoboam, king of Judah!"

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

- Jeroboam's musings reveal an evil heart of unbelief. Rather than believing God's promise to establish his dynasty (Cf. 11:31,37-38), the king sought security by turning the people away from God. Fear for his personal safety crept in when he stopped trusting God.

28 So the king consulted, and he made two golden calves; and he said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; **behold your gods, Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.**"

28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."

28 So the king sought some advice and then built two golden calves and announced, "It's too difficult for you to travel to Jerusalem. So here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

- The king's "reforms" all involved religious apostasy; this is why he was such an evil influence in Israel

— He seems to have designed his substitute religious system to offer the Israelites convenient "improvements" in the Mosaic system that tied in with certain events in their history

— The chief symbol of God's presence, the ark and the cherubim, were left to Judah. To obtain a comparable symbol for his new state, Jeroboam chose the bull universally admired for its strength and procreative power (Deut 33:17; Ps 68:30).

— His changes struck at the heart of Israel's strength, her relationship with God. These idols polluted Israel for generations.

— Jeroboam researched his ideas; he sought advice about how to maintain the secession effectively. The first change involved new religious symbols. To prevent the Israelites from returning to their magnificent temple and the ark in Jerusalem (Cf. v27) Jeroboam offered substitute objects: two golden calves or bulls.

- "...behold your gods, Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt" - after making the golden calves, Jeroboam said exactly the same thing the Israelites in the wilderness had said (Cf. Ex 32:4)

— This is the first time the Bible records any deliberate attempt to establish a heterodox cult as the religion in Israel

— Jeroboam also followed up the making of the calves with an altar and a feast similar to the ones at Sinai (v32-33; Cf. Ex 32:5)

— Furthermore, Jeroboam followed Aaron's example of setting himself up as covenant mediator, in Moses' absence, and as head of the cult. In this he was quite clearly identifying his cult with the Exodus.

— Jeroboam also assumed the role of the Davidic monarch who was the LORD's anointed and, as such, both the political and the religious leader of Israel

29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

29 He set one of them in Bethel and placed the other one in Dan.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

- Jeroboam likely chose Bethel because it geographically was located on the main highway that led into Judah, just north of the border between the two nations
- It was a convenient gathering place for Israelites who lived in the southern and central parts of the Northern Kingdom
- Since they would have had to pass through Bethel if they wanted to go south to worship in Jerusalem, Jeroboam's priests could have discouraged them from doing so there

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan.

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan.

30 Doing this was sinful, because the people traveled as far as Dan to appear before one of their idols.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

- New sanctuaries were also built to house these calves to replace the temple that contained the ark with its golden cherubim. These were located in the towns of Dan in far northern Israel and Bethel just north of the Judean border in southern Israel.
- The people were told to conduct pilgrimages to these places rather than traveling to Jerusalem. Thus the Israelites could find a sense of fulfillment in going through similar forms of worship (rituals) though they were being disobedient to God.

31 And he made houses on high places, and appointed priests from all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

31 Jeroboam built temples on the high places, and appointed his own priests from the fringe elements of the people who were not descendants of Levi.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

- New priests were appointed from all sorts of people rather than from the Levites as God had directed
- Jeroboam dismissed the Levitical priests, who then migrated to Judah (2 Chr 11:14)
- The new priests conducted religious rites for the people at shrines Jeroboam built at various high places convenient to them
- Jeroboam had an intense animosity toward the Levites: it was the Levites who had slayed the worshippers of Aaron's golden calves

— Jeroboam now bypassed the Levites by appointing his own priests and, in a supreme irony, manufactured his own golden calves as a symbol of his disdain for the Levitical priesthood.

Summary

This false religious system had a dual impact on the Northern Kingdom, Israel. First, the godly slipped over into Judah and settled there, so they could worship the Lord as He had commanded. These immigrants were a significant number. At the time of the division Judah was able to mobilize only 180,000 men (2 Chr 11:1). But just 18 years later, Judah's army entered the field with 400,000 fighting men (2 Chr 13:2).

A second impact was on the character of the Northern Kingdom. The first king made a conscious and overtly rebellious decision to break with God and His Law. Each succeeding king continued in the pattern Jeroboam set! Israel, with only 19 kings during its brief existence, had nine different dynasties. Only eight kings died a natural death. Seven were assassinated, one was a suicide, one was killed in battle, one died of injuries suffered in a fall, and the last king, Hoshea, simply disappeared into captivity. The Bible says that they all "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

With this kind of leadership, no wonder the people who remained in the apostate kingdom quickly fell into Baal worship and all sorts of injustice. God continued to send prophets to speak to Israel, but kings and people continued to resent the prophets' ministries and to reject their messages. After a stormy history—during which Israel, however, did know material prosperity under strong rulers such as Jeroboam II and Omri (who established Israel's capital at Samaria)—Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. The city of Samaria was totally destroyed and the people of Israel were deported. The Northern Kingdom disappeared from history; only the families who had settled in Judah kept the identity of the 10 tribes alive.

32 Jeroboam also instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he went up to the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

32 Jeroboam invented a festival for the fifteenth day of the eighth month similar to the festival that takes place in Judah. He approached the altar that he had set up in Bethel and

sacrificed to the calves that he had made, having stationed in Bethel the priests that he had appointed.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

- Jeroboam instituted a new festival like the festival held in Judah, a carefully designed counterfeit of the Day of Atonement

— Israel's festival was held in Bethel and in the eighth month (October-November)

exactly one month later than Judah's, a month of Jeroboam's own choosing

— Priests, sacrifices, and an altar were all provided to make Israel's festival just as good as if not "better" than Judah's, but Israel's feast was designed by Jeroboam whereas Judah's feasts had been decreed by God

Jeroboam deliberately set out to lead his people (back) into Canaanite worship, and chose his symbols carefully with that end in mind.

Jeroboam's sins are so far-reaching and repulsive that the author uses him as the example of how to define a morally deficient king (Cf. 1 Kings 16:7,9,26).

All of Jeroboam's so-called reforms involved religious apostasy. He set up new objects of worship, new places of worship, new leaders of worship, and new times of worship. These "reforms" proved to be the undoing of the Northern Kingdom. All the kings who followed Jeroboam perpetuated this idolatry.

33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, the month that he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

33 Then, on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, he went up to burn incense on the altar that he had set up in Bethel, thus beginning the festival that he had made up out of his own heart for the Israelis.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

- Jeroboam set the example for his people; he personally went up to the altar at Bethel to make offerings