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1 Kings 11 - 12



1 Kings - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the final chapters of 1 Kings, focusing on the decline of King Solomon's rule due to his love for foreign women and worship of false gods. One of Solomon's servants, Jeroboam, rebelled against him and took over the northern kingdom, while Solomon's son Rehoboam took over the southern kingdom. The people of Israel ultimately turned against Rehoboam due to his unwillingness to lighten their burdens and accommodate their needs, resulting in a divided kingdom. Gregg emphasizes the importance of humility and serving the people in leadership.

Transcript

The final chapter on Solomon in 1 Kings is chapter 11. He has been the focus of everything in the first 10 chapters and remains so in chapter 11. Only his career turns a corner at this point because he turns a corner.

All of his dealings with the Lord have been commendable up to this point. He has prayed unselfishly when he was given the opportunity to pray for whatever he wants. He has built with zeal a temple for God to promote the worship of Yahweh.

He has prayed admirably and humbly in the dedication of the temple. He has experienced great blessing. He has no doubt by this time spoken or written most of the Proverbs that became part of the book of Proverbs and many more besides.

He has given Godly instruction. He has been a man of God, but we find that he did not remain a man of God. This is the saddest chapter of his story.

Solomon disappoints us greatly in this latter chapter. Not only in the mere fact that he turned his heart away from God, but that he became a persecutor. This is the saddest chapter of an innocent rival that God is raising up against him.

It says, But King Solomon loved many foreign women. Now we are told that in the previous chapter he had gotten a lot of horses, something that Deuteronomy 17.16 had said that a king of Israel should not do. But Deuteronomy 17.17 also said a king of Israel should not multiply wives to himself.

Yet, Solomon did not obey this either. This was his downfall as it turned out. The king loved many foreign women as well as the daughter of Pharaoh.

Women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. Now, some of these probably were marriages of political nature. These are all different nations that had treaties of some kind with Israel.

Treaties were often sealed with a marriage between the two nations. A royal marriage between a king or prince and a princess. So, a lot of his wives probably were princesses of these nations.

However, it says he loved a lot of women. I imagine that a political marriage wasn't always a situation where there was affection and love. It was more political and just a convention of how nations related with each other, giving their daughters to each other as wives and so forth.

But here, we find that Solomon really was attracted to women, really liked women, and he may have married a lot of these women even if they weren't in political arranged marriages. He had far too many women to all be accounted for as political marriages. We'll find he had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

Now, concubines are not political marriages at all. They're slave women. They are wives of a lower class.

A concubine was a wife. Her children were legitimate. She was not like a prostitute or a mistress.

She was a wife, but she was of a slave status as opposed to a free status, and her children would also have slave status rather than free status. But why a man with 700 wives would need any concubines at all or feel the need for it is hard to imagine. But the man was a man who indulged himself in whatever he saw and wanted, he got it.

And it's not hard in a lifetime to see a thousand women that might be attractive to you, and if he saw a woman who was attractive, he took her, unless she was someone else's wife, we trust. But it didn't matter whether she was a Jew or a pagan, and the wives he married who were pagans did not share his faith, so it's not even a matter of him having interracial but interfaith marriages. The latter is the objectionable thing.

An interracial marriage is never frowned on in scripture, but an interfaith marriage is forbidden to God's people, and he married many women of different faiths. From the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, you shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. So again, God forbidding Israel to marry the Canaanites, the Hittites, and these others that are mentioned here.

The forbidding was because of the religions of these people, not because of their race. After all, from time to time, one of the Canaanites would become converted, like Uriah the Hittite, or Rahab the harlot, and they become converted to Yahweh, and then they became counted to be Jewish, and they were able to marry within Judaism without offense. Because although it was interracial, in that case it was not interfaith.

But in those days, every nation had its own ancestral faith, its own ancestral national gods, and it was very unusual for a person to change their gods. In fact, I believe it's in Jeremiah that God, it might be Isaiah, but I believe it's in Jeremiah, that God challenges Israel, saying, search and look, cross over the sea and inquire and see, has any nation changed their gods? And what he's saying is, Israel, ironically, the only nation that had the true God, had changed their god for fake gods. He says, the people of fake gods don't even change their gods, because they're unusual.

It was like treason. It was like turning against your nation to turn against your nation's religion. So, it would be very unusual for a Canaanite or any other pagan to change their religion, even if they married a Jew, they might marry, but they'd retain their religious faith.

Someone like Rahab, or Uriah the Hittite, who actually converted to Judaism, would be a very rare thing. And so, the assumption is, these people are going to have their own gods, and therefore, they should not be your spouses. But Solomon clung to these in love, and he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines.

Now, these princesses, I don't know where he found 700 nations to marry their princesses, so he must have married multiple princesses from each nation, which is possible. I mean, he could have whatever he wanted, and if he was the one who was in the bargaining position in a treaty with a nation, he could say, okay, we'll seal this up, I'll take all 10 of your daughters, and I'll take my wife. He could take a bunch of them at one time, but the concubines, of course, were not princesses.

Maybe, he says there were 700 wives, princesses, 300 concubines. I said, I wasn't sure why a man who had 700 wives would ever think he had a need for any concubines at all. Maybe princesses are hard to live with.

Maybe slave girls are a little more submissive. I don't know, I have no idea what his reasons were for going beyond even one wife, to tell you the truth, except that some of those were political. It says, his wives turned away his heart.

For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods. And his heart was not loyal to Yahweh, his God, as was the heart of his father, David. Now, it's interesting that David is said to have been loyal to God, when in fact, he committed adultery, committed murder, numbered the people, knowing it was the wrong thing to do, bringing a curse on the land.

All those things David did wrong, yet he is remembered as one who remained loyal to God. And so also, with the other kings that will follow, in the northern and the southern kingdoms, they will be assessed as a good king or a bad king, not based on how many good things they did or bad things they did, but whether they remained loyal to Yahweh, as opposed to going after other gods. Idolatry was the supreme offense.

Any king in Israel or Judah that worshiped idols was disloyal to Yahweh. Any king who did not worship idols was loyal to Yahweh, even if he made a whole bunch of other blunders. It's like marriage, you know.

I mean, in marriage, you want to be a perfect spouse, and you hope your spouse will be a perfect spouse too, but you know that's not going to be so. But there is one thing that's the deal breaker, and that's you go after other women, and we're done. You go after men, and we're done.

You know, you might burn the food, you might forget to empty the trash, you might be a poor handyman or a poor seamstress or something like that, but whatever may be your defects, none of that ends the marriage, but going after another partner, that ends the marriage. That's the grounds, the only grounds Jesus acknowledged for divorce. So, it's reflected in God's relation with Israel.

He often forgave a great number of offenses. Solomon broke a lot of the laws of Israel in multiplying horses, multiplying wives, worshiping at the high places, worshiping Yahweh at the high places initially. Remember, it says at the very beginning of his story that he loved the Lord, but except that he worshipped at the high places instead of at the right places.

But, I mean, there are a lot of violations of the law, both by Solomon and even David, and other kings of Israel. But a king was remembered to be a good king if he never allowed idolatry to be practiced in the country, and if he never himself worshipped idols. The rest, a multitude of sins were able to be overlooked, but to go after other gods was just the deal breaker.

And so, it was here, it says in verse 5, For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. Milcom is the same as Molech, to whom babies were burned alive in sacrifice. He was the abomination of the Ammonites.

Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow Yahweh, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, another god who required infant sacrifices, on the hill that was east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the people of Ammon, who has already been mentioned as Milcom, another name for him. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Now, he had wives from many different countries, a lot of different national deities. He apparently accommodated them, apparently allowed them to have high places or maybe even shrines in Jerusalem, where they could actually worship their gods. Not that he worshipped their gods, but just allowing the worship of false gods formally in Israel, without any criticism of it, without any objection to it, is a defect from Yahweh.

And then apparently, the worship of Chemosh and Molech and Ashtoreth, those seemed to be done by him on his own volition, not to please his wives, but he was just led away by it. So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord had commanded.

It's because Solomon had been deprived of nothing, he began to think that he was entitled to everything. He was a spoiled child. When children are not deprived of anything, when you never say no to them, you don't make happy children out of them, you make bratty children out of them.

You make children who don't know how to take no for an answer, and who throw a fit when they're denied anything. This is what we call a spoiled child. Someone who's been indulged too much.

And a spoiled child is one who has come to think that they are owed something, that they have an entitlement to something. We actually have an awful lot of spoiled children in this society now, because there's a tremendous assumption on the part of almost anybody who has anything they lack, that they are entitled to having the thing they lack. And if they can't get it themselves, then the government should give it to them.

And so we have this spoiled child attitude. And why do we? Because we've been the most prosperous nation in the world. Because we've been denied almost nothing.

And especially the post-World War II generation, who have lived at the most prosperous of all times, of any nation in modern times in the world. And our parents, bless their hearts, prospered so much, many of them having been through the Depression, they were determined that their children should lack nothing, as they had lacked growing up. And so many of us have been raised spoiled.

And even those of us that were disciplined, and were trained, and were not given everything, and were not rich, we still had very little that we desperately would want, that we can't get a hold of if we wanted. We just live in such a time and such a place. And now, we feel like we're entitled to it.

It's just what we're used to. And that's how a spoiled child is. Solomon was a spoiled child.

Once you have spoiled a child, you can't say no about anything. He thinks he's entitled to whatever he wants, anytime he wants it. So, God had given him riches, and honor, and wisdom, and all the things that are of value within the realm of legitimacy.

And Solomon had enjoyed those things, but he had apparently come to a place where he felt like, I'm not restricted in anything. In how many women I have, how much money I spend on myself, how many gods I worship. No one has any right to tell me otherwise, because I'm the king, and I get what I want.

And he was certainly accustomed to getting everything he wanted. And so, if he wanted to worship other gods, he apparently thought, that's within the realm of my privileges also. So, the Lord became angry, as we saw.

In verse 11, Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, Because you have done this, and have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you, and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.

Now, this word was given to Solomon, apparently through a prophet, and not through a personal appearance from God. God had appeared to him twice, to utter blessings upon him, and warnings. But this time, the Lord apparently sent a prophetic messenger, who told him, The kingdom is going to be taken from you, not in your time, but in your son's time.

And yet one tribe, that would be the tribe of Judah, will be left loyal to David's seed. Significant tribe, a big tribe, it was David's own tribe, and they would remain loyal to the seed of David. And so would eventually some others.

The tribe of Benjamin, which was very small, remained loyal to the house of David, even after the split. The reason it's not mentioned here is probably because it was so small and insignificant. Even Simeon probably remained part of Judah, since their territory was entirely encompassed within Judah.

But their numbers had diminished so much, so that they were probably not even worth mentioning either. In general, the tribes that broke off are usually numbered as ten. And they were the northern tribes, both north of Judah and across the Jordan.

And they formed a different country, eventually. But not in Solomon's day. This happened in Rehoboam's day.

Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. He was a descendant of the king of Edom. For it happened when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone to bury the slain, after he had killed every male in

Edom, because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel until he had cut down every male in Edom, that Hadad fled to go to Egypt.

He and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, and Hadad was still a little child. Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran. And they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, a portion of food for him, and gave him land.

Now, apparently Joab was wiping out every last Edomite he could get his sword into, and the royal house was being purged by Joab. And this young royal seed, along with some of his servants of the king, managed to escape out of the country, and the king of Egypt welcomed him, probably because the king of Egypt was not thinking in friendly terms toward Israel in those days, and therefore, since the Edomites were being persecuted by Israel, they found refuge in Egypt. And Hadad found great favor in the side of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, that is, the sister of Queen Toppenes.

Then the sister of Toppenes bore him Ganubeth, his son, whom Toppenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Ganubeth was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh. So there was a close bond between this Edomite royal family and the Egyptian royal family, an intermarriage between them, so that even the Edomite prince was treated as if he was an Egyptian prince, because he was connected on both sides to the royalty.

Now when Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his fathers, and David had been his adversary because Joab had served under David, and that Joab, the commander of the army, was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to my own country. Then Pharaoh said to him, But what have you lacked with me, that suddenly you seek to go to your own country? So he answered, Nothing, but do let me go anyway. And God raised up another adversary against him, Rezan, the son of Elieida, who had fled from his lord, Hadadizer, king of Zobah.

So he gathered men to him and became captain over a band of raiders. When David killed those of Zobah, and they went to Damascus and dwelt there and reigned in Damascus. He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the trouble that Hadad caused, and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Syria.

Now we aren't given any detail here about what kind of trouble these guys gave Solomon, but they obviously represented foreigners nearby, in Damascus to the north and in Edom to the south and east, nearby foreigners that had not sworn allegiance to Solomon, as most of those had. Now, Edom had come under David and was under Solomon, but this prince who had lived until he grew up in Egypt, came back and I don't know whether he took charge of the main population of Edom, or simply had the hearts of a significant band of Edomites that became raiders under his command against Solomon, just as say the Maccabees had become against the Syrians in the days of the

Maccabees. These people may have run raids on Solomon's outposts and so forth in Edom.

Also, the guy who's up in Damascus to the north would also have access, he had a bunch of raiders that worked with him, and they were apparently just like adversaries of Solomon that gave him trouble in miscellaneous ways. We don't have any specific reference to what they did, but they probably did run raids on Israeli cities. Then verse 26, Then Solomon's servant Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zerudah, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.

And this is what caused him to rebel against the king. Solomon had built the millow and repaired the damages to the city of David his father. The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor, and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph.

So here's a man who is a mere servant, and basically a foreman of some kind over the workers on the building projects. And because of his competency, Solomon elevated him to be over all the labor force. Now it happened at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem that the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, met him on the way.

And he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. And Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, Take for yourself ten pieces.

For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you. But he shall have one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. Notice he only mentions the ten and the one, making only eleven.

But, as I say, the numbers of the southern kingdom are sometimes said to be just one, Judah. But there was Benjamin. There was even Simeon.

But they were so inconsiderable in their population that it was almost like it was just the one. And to the north, you'd have the tribe of Manasseh divided probably into two, in all likelihood. North and south, I mean, east and west, Manasseh.

But, anyway, it says, Because they have forsaken me and worshipped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways to do what is right in my eyes and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did his father David. However, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand because I have made him ruler over all the days of his life for the sake of my servant David, whom I chose because he kept my commandments and my statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you, ten tribes.

And to his son I will give one tribe, that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for myself to put my name there. So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in my ways and do what is right in my sight to keep my statutes and my commandments, as my servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.

And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever. Now, what's interesting about this prophecy is that God actually was putting a lot of confidence in Jeroboam and giving him the opportunity to have a, almost a dynasty as lasting as that of David over much of Israel. And he said, the reason I'm taking it from David's house and giving it to you is because they worshipped idols and were not true to me.

The irony is that once Jeroboam came to power, he immediately set up idolatry in the northern kingdom and brought judgment on his own house. It's like, why can't these people get it? And I mean, I know, I know we all make mistakes. I mean, we can't be proud and think, well, I'm smarter than they are because probably they were smart people.

But I just don't get it. What part of do not worship other gods is hard for them to understand? And in fact, what is hard about not worshipping other gods? What is it about other gods that are so alluring? I personally can't even remember ever being tempted to worship other gods. Now, we do know that there is a demonic component to pagan religion because the Bible does say in both the Old and the New Testament that the gods that the heathen worship are demons.

I remember C.S. Lewis saying that when he visited, I think, Stonehenge and contemplated the ancient druid religion or whatever that was there, which he knew a lot about because he was an expert on such things. I mean, that was an area he had studied extensively even before he was a Christian and he was a scholar in those areas. But he said he felt himself almost irresistibly drawn to worship those deities when he was there at Stonehenge.

And he said he startled himself. He didn't expect that. He just felt there's this strong drawing that because he was a Christian, he didn't do it.

But when you think about that, we must be very much protected living in a country that's had such a strong Christian foundation for so long, so much influence of the Bible, such a strong influence of Christianity that perhaps that strong urge to worship demons just has been very much diluted or very much, what should we say, it's just not there, not as much. Now, there are people who are drawn to worship demons, but it can't be as strong here as it was in those days because I've never even felt it. I've never even felt a pull of any kind and probably you haven't either.

And yet there must have been something in the pagan world before Christianity came, before Satan was bound, that just drew people almost irresistibly to worship these demons, like mesmerize them. And it was a very commendable and amazing thing that a king would go his whole life without doing it. He'd receive effusive praise from God that this man was loyal to me all the days of his life.

He didn't worship these other gods. Here Jeroboam is told that he's getting the kingdom because God's judging the previous king for his idolatry. He doesn't even probably reign for a year before he's already compromising in that area himself.

It's an amazing thing. And as you read through the books of Kings, you see it again and again, king after king. You keep thinking, is this guy going to get it right? Oh, please let this guy get it right.

You kind of get your hopes up with someone who's doing the right thing at the beginning. And then he worshipped Ashtoreth and Baal and so forth. No, not again.

It's the same thing in the book of Judges. You just see this constant cycle. They get it right for a while and then the judge dies and then they go worshipping other gods again.

What a strange attraction that must have been that I and probably you cannot even relate to. So Solomon therefore, verse 40, sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak the king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Now Jeroboam did the same thing that Hadad did. He fled to Egypt to get away from Solomon. Although Hadad had fled there to get away from David.

Now Solomon was the persecutor and tried to kill Jeroboam. Apparently news got to Solomon. We don't read that the information was communicated to Solomon.

It just says that this prophet alone out in the field with Jeroboam told him this in a private thing. But someone must have talked because it got back to Solomon and then he started persecuting, just like Saul persecuted David. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was 40 years.

Then Solomon rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David, his father. And Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his place. So when it says he rested with his fathers, that just means he was buried, his body was laid to rest in the same tomb as David.

The story of Solomon therefore ends without any indication of him ever returning to God. However, I believe that the book of Ecclesiastes would bear witness that he did eventually return to God. And we won't go into that now, but it's clear that Ecclesiastes is written by Solomon as an old man and he does recall throughout the book his journey of

exploration in life without God.

But he does come to the conclusion at the end. He says, what is the conclusion of the matter? Fear God, keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. So it would appear that Solomon later in life, after the record closes here, leaves us a testimony in Ecclesiastes that he returned to the Lord.

Though no doubt with many regrets about the wasted years and the folly that he had been guilty of. Now in chapter 12, we have his son Rehoboam coming to power and he's a fool. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, there's great vanity under the sun because a man may be wise and build up his estate through his wisdom, but he's going to die.

And who knows whether the son to whom he leaves it will be a fool. Solomon had to wonder about that. But he probably saw his sons as a bunch of fools or potential fools, a bunch of spoiled brats like him in all likelihood.

And here his wisdom had built up this empire, but his son was going to destroy it. Now Rehoboam went to Shechem for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. So it was when Jeroboam, the son of Nebat heard it, he was still in Egypt for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt that he sent and called him.

Then Jeroboam and the whole congregation of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam. Now apparently the people, after Solomon was dead, called for Jeroboam to come back from Egypt. So he was already being viewed by them as their leader and probably their spokesman.

And they came to Rehoboam with an ultimatum. They said in verse 4, Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the burdensome service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us and we will serve you.

So because of all the building projects and the lavish lifestyle of King Solomon, he had leaned heavily on the tax base and on the labor force of Israel. I mean, let's face it, it was an expensive administration. And therefore the money and the support and the back-breaking labor had to come out of someone.

And the people of Israel were tired. Tired of the taxation, tired of the labor. And therefore they said, listen, we did this for your dad, we're not going to do it for you.

If you'll lighten our load, we'll serve you. Otherwise we won't. So he said to them, depart for three days, then come back to me.

And the people departed. And King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived and said, how do you advise me to answer these people? And they spoke to him saying, if you will be a servant to these people today and

serve them and answer them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever. Now this doesn't mean that in those days a king was seen as a servant of his people, although that's always a good ideal.

What I think they're saying is, if you'll accommodate them now, they'll accommodate you for the rest of your reign. Accommodating, so placing yourself in the form of their servant, giving them what they want at this time. Not necessarily that he'd be a servant ruler like Jesus is or like all good authorities should be, I don't know that that's what they're suggesting.

They were the advisors of Solomon and he certainly wasn't a servant ruler of that sort. And they probably were not requiring that. But they were saying that, you don't have to be the big shot.

You don't have to be the one who struts your office and says, no one's gonna tell me what to do. You can be humble yourself here. You can accommodate these people, give them what they want, serve them today and they will serve you forever.

But he rejected the counsel which the elders gave him. And he consulted the young men who had grown up with him who stood before him. Not a good idea.

He said to them, what counsel do you give? How should we answer this people who've spoken to me saying, lighten the yoke of your father that he put upon us. Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him saying, thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you saying, your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us. Thus you shall say to them, my little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist.

Now as I'm gonna be more heavy handed than he was. And now, whereas my father laid a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips.

I will chastise you with scorpions is what it actually says in the Hebrew. The translators here assume that scorpions is an idiom for a certain kind of a whip, a scourge. And so the young fools, heady with new found power, just grown up.

Now they're the ruling generation. They're gonna experiment with the same kind of heady power that Solomon had reigned with. Solomon had been oppressive.

Solomon had basically made the people serve his opulent lifestyle. And these young people say, why shouldn't we have that too? We should have that too. One difference is that Solomon had inherited a lot of that from his father and a lot of the privilege and so forth.

And also he had been a wise administrator in many respects. He had made the country rich as well as putting heavy loads on the people. The country had prospered under him.

There's no question about that. But they were gonna lose their prosperity now. They lost their prosperity in the time of Rehoboam and they never regained it.

The country never was as wealthy or glorious as it had been in the days of Solomon again. But young people often don't have the perspective of history. They just say, we grew up with this privilege.

No one's gonna take this privilege from us now. We're entitled. And honestly, I can't really help but see similarities between that and our own time.

We've got, you know, the greatest generation as they were called, the ones who went through World War II. They made America into the greatest, most prosperous nation in the world. And then come the upstarts who haven't done anything to make the nation great, haven't accomplished anything.

They just grew up with all the privilege and they say, hey, we like this privilege. And they come into power. They get voted off.

They'd say, let's just tax these people to death. It's just like these guys. It's like they have no concept of, you know, you really ought to serve the people.

You really ought to do something to keep the people's allegiance. You're gonna kind of alienate people if you become an oppressive tyrant. It never crosses their mind.

They just say, hey, we're entitled. We're privileged people. Certainly the citizens will understand that.

We should get our own special privileges, our own fat pensions and, you know, no term limits and, you know, our own healthcare that's different than what the people have to have. I mean, we're entitled. We're the ruling class here.

And it's like it never crosses their mind that people object to this. Or if it does, they'll just seek to crush it. And that's what these young fools were telling Rehoboam to do.

And he was a young fool too. And he liked what they suggested. Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day as the king directed, saying, come back to me the third day.

Then the king answered the people roughly and rejected the counsel which the elders had given him. And 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 chastened you with whips.

I will chastise you with scorpions. So the king did not listen to the people for the turn of affairs was from the Lord that he might fulfill his word that the Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilohite to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. So God actually kind of blinded this young

fool to the wisdom of the older counselors so that he would make this foolish move and fulfill the prophecy.

Now, when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king saying, what portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse to your tents, oh Israel. Now see to your own house, oh David. Now that is what some of them had said in the days of David.

The northern tribes, they didn't feel ownership of David. He was of the tribe of Judah and there always were tribal rivalries. And they thought, what do we need a king who's from Judah for? The rest of us don't have any stake in him.

All of our tribes are kind of bunched together to the north in a cluster. We can make our own kingdom and ignore this offspring of David. Now they were willing to give it a try.

They're willing to keep David's son as their king. But since he turned out to be a jerk, they just said, well, okay, that's that. We're not getting anything more to do with him.

So Israel departed to their tents. But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah. Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram who was in charge of the revenue.

But all Israel stoned him with stones and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back. They sent for him and called him to the congregation and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

Now that is modified in the next verse. And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin. 180,000 chosen men who were warriors to fight against the house of Israel that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

Notice it says in verse 20, there were none who followed the house of David except the house of Judah. And the very next verse makes it clear that the tribe of Benjamin was also included in that. The southern kingdom came to be called Judah as opposed to the northern kingdom that was called Israel.

The obvious reason for calling the northern kingdom Israel is that the vast majority of the tribes of Israel comprised the northern kingdom. The reason for calling the southern kingdom Judah was that it was such a large kingdom compared to the other two, Simeon and Benjamin, that they were insignificant. And it could even be said that no one except the tribe of Judah followed him.

Well, you know, with the exception of those few Benjamites. And so, usually the southern kingdom is said to be Benjamin and Judah, but the name of the kingdom was Judah. So, Rehoboam was not going to let them secede, just like in the Civil War, some of the states in the south wanted to secede from the Union, and a war was fought in order to prevent them from doing so.

And that was what Rehoboam intended to do, to fight a war to say, you can't secede, I'm your king, you can't set up an alternative king, rival to me. But the word of God came to Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, speak to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, saying, thus says the Lord, you shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from me.

Therefore they obeyed the word of the Lord and turned back according to the word of the Lord. Now, whether they ignored Rehoboam, because the people feared the Lord and obeyed the prophet, or whether Rehoboam himself took it to heart, and said, well, okay, I'll let him go, that's what God wants. That would have been very commendable of Rehoboam to just give up his ambitions and 10 twelfths of his kingdom, just because God said to, when he could, of course, have ignored God like others did.

But we don't know if their turning back was with Rehoboam's approval, or the people just decided they're not going to follow Rehoboam into something that God tells them not to do. Therefore they obeyed the word of the Lord and turned back according to the word of the Lord. Then Jeroboam, the king of the north of Israel, built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim and dwelt there.

Also he went out from there and built Peniel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom may return to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their Lord, Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam, king of Judah.

Now this seemed to be a reasonable thing for him to fear, because the Israelites from all over the country were accustomed to going to Jerusalem for the festivals. I mean, it was like part of their culture. And he knew that next time a festival comes around, if he allows all his people to go down to Jerusalem, they're going to say, Hey, this is our old capital city.

This is where David reigned. This is where our temple is. This is where our religion is.

This is where we serve God. And they might say, You know, we made a mistake. We should go back and be part of this movement again.

Let's go back to follow the house of David. And then, of course, they'd kill Jeroboam

because he was a rebel, you know, against the king. So, I mean, his fears were justified.

His reaction was not. Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said to the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.

So he did the same thing that Aaron had done. He made a gold calf and he said that very same thing. This is your God who brought you out of Egypt.

In other words, we're not worshipping Ra, the Egyptian sun god, who's represented by the same kind of calf, but we're worshipping Yahweh. We're just representing him by this calf. That was not okay.

That was the abomination. This thing became called the sin of Jeroboam. Later in the books of Kings, it keeps referring to the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

And it's referring to this, setting up golden calves. He did it actually in two places. In verse 29, He set one up in Bethel and he set the other in Dan.

Now this thing became a sin for the people who went to worship before one as far as Dan. The one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places and made priests from every class of people who were not of the sons of Levi.

This, of course, was to undermine the legitimacy of the Jerusalem worship, which was served by the Levites. So he made priests from other tribes. He legitimized priesthood that were not Levites.

This, of course, made the Levites upset with him and many of them migrated back down to Judea or Judah and became part of Rehoboam's kingdom. In fact, because of this sin of Jeroboam, the more conscientious sort among all the northern tribes immigrated back and they moved back to Judah so that the tribe of Judah, or the nation of Judah eventually had members of all 12 tribes living there. Still, Judah was the main one.

But there was a remnant of all the other tribes, and especially the Levites, who were offended by what Jeroboam did here. And then they decided to go to Judah instead. Jeroboam then had to do something to try to prevent that mass immigration.

It says, Jeroboam ordained a feast of the 15th day of the 8th month like the feast that was in Judah and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel, he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.

So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the 15th day of the 8th month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense. So, he's

basically setting up an alternative religious system to that in Jerusalem in order to prevent people from re-bonding with Judah.

Now, it was God's desire that they not re-bond with Judah. God was the one who caused the split. Therefore, God must have been concerned about this too in some way.

He must have known that if they kept going to Jerusalem, that was going to cause a bond. And if they didn't bond, how could two rival nations use the same worship center on the same holidays? I mean, this really was a dilemma that Jeroboam faced. He did not answer the dilemma well, but I'm not really sure what the answer would be.

It would seem that if his country is going to be a separate country, they would have to have a separate capital and a separate shrine, a separate worship center. It's possible that had he built a temple like Solomon's or a tabernacle in another location, that it would have been okay. After all, the tabernacle had been in Nob, it had been in Shiloh, it had been in Gibeon, and it had been okay with God.

But in all likelihood, had Jeroboam built a legitimate worship structure in one of the places that were now his territory, and maintained the true worship of Yahweh according to the law, that is, not making up new festivals like he made up here, not ordaining non-Levitical priests, not putting up calves as idols, if he had done something more to duplicate the right kind of worship that had been done, let's say, even in the period of Samuel, where the worship was not in Jerusalem, probably it would have been legitimate. We don't really know. He didn't do it, and if he had, we would find out what God had thought about it.

But it's clear he had to do something. If this is going to be a permanently separate nation, then they're going to have to have a different place they go to worship. The same God, but in a different place.

I'm not sure exactly what God had in mind for them to do. Obviously not what they did. But it does seem like there could have been alternatives that were less offensive to God, that would not be the sin of Jeroboam, as these calves became called.

Anyway, we now have the beginning of the divided kingdom, and it remains divided until the northern kingdom is destroyed, and so they are never rejoined. However, as I say, there were individuals from all the ten tribes of the northern kingdom that migrated back down and relocated into Judah and became part of the kingdom of Judah. So that even though the northern kingdom just really was obliterated by the Assyrians and didn't exist anymore, there were still remnants of all twelve tribes that survived because they were part of Judah.

And when Judah was taken into captivity and brought back, there were still in that entity members of all twelve tribes. So that even later in the time of Jesus, in the time of James,

he could write to the twelve tribes who were scattered abroad. They had all become part of Judah and all therefore are called Jews.

The word Jew is from the word Judah. And no matter what tribe a person is from, if they're from one of the tribes of Israel, they're called Jews after Judah. But that's because all the tribes that survived the Assyrian wipeout of the northern kingdom, all the members of tribes had become part of the nation of Judah.

And therefore they became integrated as Judahites. And then when the term Jew came to be coined later on for those who were from Judah, it included everybody of the nation of Judah, regardless of their tribal background. Okay, so we have the beginning of the splits here.

And from this point on, the historian is going to have to do something innovative. And that is to try to trace two separate national histories that are running parallel and their succession of kings. It's kind of a tricky business, but the author does it.

He has a way of doing that, which we'll explain next time. But we'll quit at this point.