

# A KINGDOM DIVIDED; THE ROAD TO DESTRUCTION

1 King 11:1-12:24

Key Verse: 11:9, 10

**“The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord’s command.”**

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 Moses gives instructions for the king. The king must be chosen by God. He must not be a foreigner. He must not acquire a large number of horses for himself; he must not send people to Egypt to get more horses; he is not to take many wives or accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. He must copy the words of the law on a scroll and read it frequently. He is not above the law, but like every other man, he must obey the law. Solomon’s heart turned from God when he did not follow God’s word.

Politically speaking, it was a wise move to marry Pharaoh’s daughter. But Solomon didn’t stop there. He married many foreign women. And he enjoyed them. The Bible says that Solomon loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter. They were from the nations with which God had warned the Israelites not to intermarry. They were not to intermarry with those people who worshiped other gods because such marriages would turn the hearts of the people from God. That is just what happened. Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. “Solomon held to them in love.” How could a man love that many women? Apparently he liked to please them all, so he kept them happy by worshiping their gods. Especially after he got old he followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not follow the Lord completely as had David. Romans describes this sinful life style like this: although they knew God they did not give thanks to him or glorify him, so their hearts became dark and their thinking futile. This happened to Solomon. He built a high place for Chemosh the god of Moab on a hill east of Jerusalem. He also built high places for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He offered sacrifices to the gods all of his foreign wives.

God was angry with Solomon. God had appeared to Solomon twice: Once in Gibeon before the temple was built. At that time, God promised to give him whatever he wanted. He pleased God by asking for wisdom to be a good shepherd for God’s people (3:5-15) The second time God appeared to him was after the temple was built, after he had achieved all he desired to do. God promised to put

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his name, his eyes and heart in the temple forever, if Solomon would but walk before him in integrity of heart and uprightness and keep his laws. (9:2-7) Even though God had appeared to him twice and gave him very great and precious promises, Solomon had disobeyed God. Now God must punish him as he promised.

God decided to tear the kingdom from his hand and give it to his subordinates. For David's sake, he would not tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand, but from the hand of his son. He would also spare one piece of the kingdom—one tribe and leave it under the rule of David's descendants.

God began to raise up adversaries against Solomon. Among his enemies were Hadad the Edomite. He had escaped Joab's ethnic cleansing of Edom and had been living in Egypt. He had married the sister of the Pharaoh of Egypt, and he had become very popular in the Egyptian court. But when he heard that David was dead and Joab was dead, he was ready to make his move.

Another adversary was Rezon. He was a rebel subject of Hadadezer king of Zobah. When David's army had defeated Hadadezer, Rezon escaped with a band of rebels and went to Damascus. They took over the country and built a stronghold there. He harassed Solomon continually.

The most dangerous enemy was Jeroboam. He was an Ephraimite, the son of Nebat. He was a man of great ability. Solomon had recognized this and had put him in charge of the labor force of Ephraim and Manasseh. These two tribes constituted the main strength of northern Israel. Once Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met Jeroboam and prophesied that God would tear the kingdom from Solomon's son and give it to him. God promised that if Jeroboam would walk in God's ways as David had, God would establish his dynasty as he had established that of King David. After receiving this anointing from the prophet, Jeroboam fled to Egypt where he lived as an exile. (11:14-26;26-40;37,38)

Solomon reigned over Israel for 40 years. He was renowned throughout the world for his wisdom and wealth. He received a royal burial and his son, Rehoboam succeeded him to the throne. Rehoboam's mother's name was Naamah. She was an Ammonite. When Jeroboam heard of Solomon's death he returned from exile in Egypt and became the leader of the opposition party. He went with the whole assembly of Israel to Rehoboam with a simple request. He asked that King Rehoboam lighten the yoke which Solomon had put on the people. Solomon had pressed many people into forced labor to build many cities. He had taxed the

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people heavily to support his building projects. Jeroboam asked him to lighten the load a little. Rehoboam consulted the older men who gave him wise advice. They he asked his drinking buddies and they gave him poor advice.

Rehoboam told him that his father beat them with whips, but he would scourge them with scorpions. He promised to put on the people an even heavier yoke. This was the advice of the young men around him. So, Rehoboam, in his pride, did not listen to the people. “This turn of events was from the Lord to fulfill the words of the prophet to Jeroboam. These words were the match that lit the fire. The Israelites, led by Jeroboam, said, “To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!” The rupture that would last throughout Israel’s history had begun. Only the tribe of Judah would remain loyal to David. These events were not accidents or mistakes. The sovereign Lord was in control. The writer of Kings says, “So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the Lord, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. (12:15)

Jeroboam was made king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained faithful to Rehoboam. So, Israel rebelled against the house of David. The forced laborers killed Adoniram, the man in charge of the labor force, and almost killed king Rehoboam. The Israelites made Jeroboam king over Israel. The old division was again established and the united kingdom that David had tried to make was irreparably broken. Rehoboam went back to Jerusalem and mustered his army to fight, but God told Rehoboam not to fight against his brothers, so they didn’t fight but went home.

The fundamental cause of division was the disobedience of Solomon. He did not keep the law of the Lord. The direct cause was Rehoboam’s foolish response to the people’s plea for help. If he had listened and lightened their load, then history would have gone in another direction. The history of the nation, however, was in the sovereign hands of God. He is the one who tore the kingdom from Solomon’s descendants and gave it to Jeroboam. God controls history. Our days are in his hands. We sometimes regret the seemingly small mistakes of the past and say, “if only I had done this or that...” but we must realize that God is in control. The best way to live is to live before him, to repent of sin and follow his word. When we stand on God’s side, he gives the victory and he uses us to accomplish his own purposes and to fulfill his promises.