

1 Kings 14-16 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

III. The Kingdom Divides • 12:1-24

IV. Jeroboam (Israel) • 12:25-14:20

Israel has split in 2, with the northern 10 tribes under the kingship of Jeroboam from the tribe of Ephraim, called Israel.

To the south is the kingdom & tribe of Judah under the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

Last week we saw that Jeroboam was concerned the annual pilgrimage of people to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the religious feasts would over time cause the people to regret their secession & they'd move to reunite under David's dynasty.

So he set up idols at alternative worship centers at Bethel in the southern part of Israel & at Dan in the far north.

Then he made priests of anyone who wanted to be one.

Obviously, this greatly displeased God Who sent a prophet to rebuke Jeroboam & tell him his dynasty would not last.

D. Ahijah Prophesies Jeroboam's End • 14:1-18

1-3

Wow Jeroboam, what's the matter? Your religion doesn't help a whole lot now that your boy's sick, does it?

Now that you have a real need, you realize there's no power, no grace, no efficacy in man-made religion.

So you have to go to a true prophet of the real God for help.

Your fake priests & phony gods can't cut it.

How interesting that people live their lives with their *personal religion of convenience* until it doesn't provide the help they need in a time of crisis. Then they run to God & plead His help.

What's sad is that so often, as soon as God helps, they forget all about Him & go right back to their made-up 7-11, Circle K, Stoop & Go, AM PM, Quickie Mart faith.

And if God *doesn't* come through & their loved one dies or things blow up, then they *curse* God & get all mad at Him for not coming through.

Why will people *ignore* God all their lives, then when life throws them a hard curve, they *demand* He show up & bail them out or blame Him for not keeping their lives flowing along without distress? ***Talk about hypocrisy!***

Jeroboam told his wife to disguise herself so as not to let anyone know she had to go for help.

This reminds me of the faith teachers who've taught that sickness & death show a lack of faith.

Yet, as they age, they end up needing to see a doctor & go to the hospital & have all kinds of medical procedures – but they do it *on the sly*, under assumed names.

Another reason Jeroboam's wife went in disguise was to hide her identity from Ahijah since Jerry knew he'd not be inclined to help "Jeroboam the Apostate."

4-13

Ahijah foretells the awful fate of Jeroboam's family. They would soon suffer tremendous grief & suffering *because of his sin*.

Though the son Abijah was young, he alone of all the family had a heart for God.

So he'd be saved from the ruin that was soon to fall on Jeroboam's house by being given the ultimate reward - entrance into God's presence.

14

Ahijah was saying that *right at that moment*, God had selected the man who would supplant Jeroboam's throne & execute God's justice.

Now—Ahijah looks to the *distant future* when the apostasy *begun* by Jeroboam would result in the full measure of God's judgment.

15-16

This was fulfilled 2 centuries later when the Assyrians conquered the northern nation of Israel & deported the entire population.

17-18

E. Jeroboam Dies • 14:19-20

19-20

Nadab reigns only 2 years, then he's deposed by Baasha of the tribe of Issachar who wipes out Jeroboam's *entire* house – just as Ahijah foretold.

V. Rehoboam (Judah) • 14:21-31

21

Though the daughter of Pharaoh was reckoned as Solomon's *official court wife*, Naamah was his *first* wife, so her firstborn son was heir to the throne.

22-23

Even though they had the glorious temple there in Jerusalem, they fell to idolatry because of the influence of Solomon in his later years, & because of what they saw among the tribes to the north.

It's *only one generation* after David, yet *already* Judah has fallen into gross idolatry.

To give an idea of *how* gross it was . . .

24

"Perverted persons" in Hebrew is qadash (kaw-daysh).

It refers to male ritual prostitutes; *homosexuals*.

V. 24 says *it was this kind* of social & religious practice that had *resulted in God's judgment* on the Canaanites who live in the land prior to Israel.

When we speak about homosexuality, we need to *consider it from 2 perspectives*;

- 1) The personal/individual level,
- 2) The social-policy level.

Went golfing this weekend with my sons. Because just 3 of us & course busy, a 4th joined our group.

On the 3rd hole, he asked I did. The whole tone of his conversation then changed.

At about the 6th hole, he asked what our church's stand on homosexuality was.

The wheels spun like mad as I tried to sum up in as few words as possible something that would be accurate.

Difficult because as a pastor I know there are people in this church who love God with all their heart & struggle with homosexual temptation.

They are dear, godly saints, & this is the wrestle with. I love & respect them immensely!

At the same time, I am totally opposed to groups that lobby for & advocate social & legal acceptance of homosexuality.

As Christians living in a culture where Biblical morality is being systematically expunged, we need to remember that while we seek to hold the line on traditional norms of morality against those who would tear them down, there are individuals who struggle & need our love & compassion, not anger & vitriol.

Homosexuality is a sin. So is adultery, & theft, & greed, & envy.

Jesus died for those who envy, & are greedy, & steal, & cheat on their spouses. He also died for homosexuals.

There is both forgiveness & healing for all sin for those who repent & put their faith in Christ.

As the community of those who have been redeemed it's our duty to love & encourage those who struggle with envy, greed, materialism, & sexual sin to walk in holiness.

It's also our duty to be salt & light in a fallen world & to stand for holiness, regardless of what's popular or politically correct.

We're called not to be politically-correct but to be Kingdom-focused.

At different times in history, God's people have been called upon to address different moral issues.

In the Roman Empire it meant when Romans committed infanticide by exposing unwanted babies on hillsides, the Christians both spoke out against the practice & went out to recover the children and adopt them as their own.

During the 18th & 19th Century in England & the United States, it meant speaking out about the terrible sin of slavery & helping with the abolitionist movement.

30 years ago it meant opposing abortion & providing opportunities for women with unwanted pregnancies other options than killing the unborn.

Today it means opposing the normalization of homosexuality as social policy while at the same time loving & being kind to those who advocate it.

Just today, a story broke in the press about a church in Dallas that cancelled a memorial service for a homosexual.

The church had offered their facility for the service though the man did not attend there.

The church was simply seeking to minister to his family and offered their

building.

On the day before the service was to be held they saw photos that were going to be shown, & realized the man lived in an openly homosexual relationship. Some of the pictures were entirely inappropriate.

They then discovered the service was going to be conducted by homosexual advocates.

Since the church opposes homosexuality, they withdrew the offer of their facility & informed the family.

Now, homosexual groups in Texas are suing & attempting to use hate-crimes legislation against the church.

This is the scene we find ourselves in today.

25-26

Think of it – the glory & splendor of Jerusalem Solomon lavished on it don't last even a single decade after him.

5 years later, it's all confiscated by this Egyptian invasion.

Confirmation of this invasion by Shishak is found on the walls of the great temple in Karnak.

Shishak boasted of the treasure he looted & the inscriptions identify 156

Hebrew captives being hauled back to Egypt in chains.

They bear the names of various cities, including Taanach, Gibeon, Aijalon, & Beth Shan.

27-28

That Rehoboam *remained in power* means Judah became a vassal state of Egypt after the invasion & conquest.

Rehoboam had no gold left to replace the 500 shields his father had made, so he made replacements out of the less valuable bronze.

The Glory Days of Jerusalem were over but Rehoboam refused to let go & played make believe instead.

As his father Solomon had done, when it was time for a royal procession from palace to temple, he sent the royal guard to grab the ceremonial shields & escort him.

They marched through the streets behind the shields as though nothing had changed.

But everything had changed – God had removed His divine protection & blessing.

The shields weren't gold, they were cheap bronze – counterfeits!

The same happens today. God's blessing is all over a church or movement.

His presence is rich & powerful. But then hearts stray from Him and the blessing departs.

The glory fades.

What do the people do? They make-up a cheap imitation.

They go through the motions of what used to be so powerful & filled with the presence & power of God – but He's not in it.

The gold is gone – and all that's left is an bronze fake.

The story is told of St. Francis of Assisi visiting the Pope in St. Peter's in Rome.

Francis had a reputation for being incredibly holy & close to God & had been

invited to the Vatican for an interview.
When he arrived, he was given a tour of St. Peter's Basilica, with all its rich treasures.

Finally, he was ushered into the Pope's presence.

The Pope said, "Well Francis, what do you think of St. Peter's? No longer need we say, as Peter once said, to the beggar 'Silver & gold have I none.'"

Francis replied, "Yes, but also we can no longer say to the beggar, 'Rise & walk.'"

29-20

When the north first seceded, Rehoboam raised an army of 185,000 & prepared to invade but God told him not to, & to his credit, Rehoboam listened & sent the troops home.

That doesn't mean there wasn't tension along the border between the 2 kingdoms.

There was a constant debate between the 23 over where the border ought to be. The conflicts along that border went on for years, just as there continues to be a battle along Israel's border with Lebanon & Syria.

31

Rehoboam reigned 17 years then his son Abijam took the throne of Judah.

VI. Abijam (Judah) • 15:1-8

15:1-2

Which is the longer spelling of *Absalom*.

Absalom's daughter *Tamar* married Uriel of Gibeah.

Their daughter was this *Maachah* – making her *Rehoboam's 2nd cousin*.

3-5

This is amazing! Even though 3 generations have now turned their backs on God, God continues to bless them for David's sake.

When I look at the world, so often it seems like evil is so powerful & influential while that which is good & right is weak & inconsequential.

These words put the lie to that thought. One man's whole-hearted devotion to God is a powerful force for good & blessing.

Never underestimate the power of even the simplest kind word or act of goodness.

It's like a pebble thrown into a pond, you have no idea where the ripples will reach.

6

Curious—Why the return to *Rehoboam's* name here?

Rehoboam & Jeroboam are synonymous with Judah & Israel.

The break between the 2 kingdoms began in their reigns but the conflict between their thrones went on after they were gone.

7

In 2 Chr. 13 we read a story about a major engagement that took place between these 2 involving huge armies.

8

VII. Asa (Judah) • 15:9-24

9-15

Asa was a good & godly king who sought to return Judah to the worship of Yahweh.

The task of reforming the religious practices of the kingdom were immense. He was able to accomplish everything except the removal of all the high places.

The reason he never succeeded at this is because they were something the people enjoyed & set up on their own.

He could tear them down, but the next day they'd be set back up again.

Asa knew that unless the hearts of the people were returned to the Lord, a campaign against the high places would be a waste of time.

But he did deal with those things he could. He removed all the evidences of idolatry in & around Jerusalem.

It's uncertain here if by Asa's father it's meant Abijam, or David. More than likely it refers to David who he's likened to.

When Shishak had invaded, many of the temple treasures had been hidden away lest they be looted by the Egyptian forces.

Asa removed them from their hiding place & restored them to the temple treasuries, along with new offerings he made that sought to make up for what was lost to Shishak's looting.

16-17

Under the reign of Baasha, the northern kingdom gained the upper hand in the ongoing conflict with Judah.

They built a fortress city a few miles north of Jerusalem named Ramah.

It was meant as a form of intimidation & control – and it worked.

18-22

Asa's gambit worked though making an alliance with one of Israel's traditional enemies was a bad move for which he was rebuked by one of the prophets – 2 Chr. 16

God had made it clear if they looked to & trusted in Him, He would defend them.

As godly as Asa was, this little piece of political maneuvering was ill-advised & led to problems later.

When Baasha had to turn his attention away from the south to deal with the invading Syrians in the North, the people of Judah dismantled Ramah & used its stones to build 2 of their own northern border fortresses.

23

2 Chr. 16 tells us this malady came on him in the 39th year of his reign.

It seems to have come because of his growing rebellion against God.

When the prophet rebuked him for using the temple treasures to buy off Ben-Hadad, instead of repenting, Asa had him thrown into prison.

When he came down with this disease of the feet, it says that instead of turning to the Lord, he turned to the physicians & *refused* to ask God for help.

Asa is a good picture of someone who starts out very right, zealous for God's glory, & willing to take an unpopular stand because he knows what's right.

But after several success; 2 Chr. tells us he had a *few* military victories, he lost his sense of dependence on God & became hard.

24

Actually, Asa's foot disease became so debilitating, Jehoshaphat served as a *co-regent* with his father for 4 years.

VIII. Nadab (Israel) • 15:25-32

25-32

IX. Baasha (Israel) • 15:33-16:7

33-16:1

Hanani was the prophet who'd rebuked Asa. His son Jehu was also a prophet.

2-4

Burial was an important part of this culture.

Family & the family's connection to the land was a central value.

When you died, you wanted to be buried along with your ancestors and hoped your descendants would also be gathered to the same burial site.

The reason why was because they drew their identity from the sense of connection to the family and its place in the land.

So, to miss out on burial was seen as a major tragedy.

As had happened to Jeroboam before, God tells Baasha, that he & his family will likewise miss out on burial because the animals will consume them.

Baasha's sin was even worse than Jeroboam's because God had told Baasha year before Jeroboam was being rejected & judged because of his idolatry.

That Baasha would continue in it means he's completely spiritually bankrupt & without excuse.

5-7

X. Elah (Israel) • 16:8-14

8-10

So in the northern kingdom, this is now the *3rd dynasty* to rule.

11-14

XI. Zimri (Israel) • 16:15-20

15-16

The military leaders of Israel were engaged in laying siege to a city some Philistines had made a stand in as a way to regain their lost domain.

It was while they were engaged in the siege that Zimri staged the coup that toppled Baasha's dynasty.

In just a few days, he managed to wipe out Baasha's entire house.

But when word reached the military in the field, they said, "We're not following Zimri!"

They picked one of their own commanders there in the field with them – *Omri*.

He makes the 4th dynasty in Israel.

17-20

XII. Omri (Israel) • 16:21-28

21-22

Omri had the backing of the military so it was obvious who the victor would be.

23-24

From this point on, Samaria will be the capital of the northern Kingdom. The digs conducted by Harvard University at Samaria confirm it became the capital of the northern Kingdom during the reign of Omri.

25-28

Ahab becomes a real problem because of his marriage to the lovely Jezebel who will bring all kinds of idolatry to Israel.

This couple – Ahab & Jezebel – lead Israel into the sins that will culminate in the Northern Kingdom’s hideous demise at the hands of the Assyrians.

XIII. Ahab (Israel) • 16:29-22:40

A. Ahab’s Wickedness • 16:29-34

29-32

Hiram, the king of Sidon & Tyre was David & Solomon’s friend.

Josephus says *Ethbaal*, a priest of the cult of Astarte, assassinated Hiram’s son & stole the throne.

His daughter Jezebel was devoted to the Sidonian god of war & weather, Ba’al. When she married Ahab, she brought her idol to Samaria & Ahab erected an altar & temple to Baal.

Up till now, the kings of the north have followed in “the sin of Jeroboam.”

But remember, when Jeroboam set up the golden images of the calves, he said they were representations of Yahweh.

Ahab carried on in the same tradition, but went *further* by adding in the worship of another deity.

What made this so hideous was the **WAY** the Sidonians worshipped Baal.

Their worship included public bestiality, human sacrifice, & torture.

The reason Jezebel comes in for such heavy condemnation in Scripture is because she was a bold ambassador & advocate for Baal.

She brought these idols to Israel and made them fashionable.

She spread their worship throughout the cities and villages of the land.

It’s interesting that archaeologists have found lots of evidence of Baal worship in the north, but very little in the south.

For instances, we have lots of names on all kinds of *ostraca* (pottery shards).

Many of these names from the northern kingdom include the name of Baal.

Only a few have been found in the south.

This isn’t to say Judah didn’t engage in idolatry – it did.

But the idols were presented as representations of *Yahweh*.

Also, Judah had a few good kings who at different times brought religious reform & removed the evidences of pagan worship.

The North *never* had a time of such reform. *All* her kings were evil.

33

Along with the worship of Baal was added the religion of Asherah/Astarte.

She as the goddess of sexuality & as you probably guess, the forms of her

worship were incredibly debauched.
Around her idol were set up large wooden phallic images that were supposed to appease her.
Ahab made one and set it up in the center of the capital.

34

Ahab gave permission to a man named Hiel of Bethel to rebuild Jericho, probably intending it to be a fortress on his eastern border to deal with Moabite raiders. When Jericho was destroyed by Israel when they entered the Promised Land 500 years before this, Joshua laid a curse on it & said whoever rebuilt it would do so at great personal expense

Joshua 6:26 • Then Joshua charged *them* at that time, saying, "Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates."

Here we find the *literal fulfillment* of Joshua's words.

It's mentioned here because it gives us a picture of just how spiritual corrupt Israel became during the reign of Ahab.

Archaeologists have discovered in the ruins of many Canaanite sites urns containing the remains of infants.

But instead of being in cemeteries, they're part of foundations & walls.

Ancient texts speak of how people would place live babies inside urns, seal them up & place them in walls.

They hoped the life of the child would become a part of the wall & make it impervious to outside forces.

Other texts refer to the practice of slitting a person's throat & draining their blood into the mortar that was then used to build a wall.

When Joshua uttered his curse over the ruins of Jericho, he spoke prophetically of Hiel's abominable practice.

What's stunned archaeologists is the vast number of infant urns they've found.

It was a common practice *throughout* the ancient Middle East for hundreds of years.

Before we rush to judgment on their abominable practices, let's not forget nearly 4,000 abortions are performed every day in this country.

The ancients killed their babies for personal gain – to make their homes more secure & prosperous.

Why do most people seek abortion today? Their reason is little different.

Next week – the fascinating story of Elijah.