

1 Kings 12-13

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings 12?

Last week we witnessed the sad and tragic downfall of Israel's 3rd king, the son of David, his name was Solomon.

And you'll remember that God told Solomon as a result of his apostasy, the kingdom of Israel would be divided.

But in his grace, God waited until after Solomon's death before this division took place.

Now there are 2 main characters we see in this division that's unfolding, a man named Jeroboam, and a man named Rehoboam.

Jeroboam was a former servant of Solomon, whom God promised a kingdom too so long as he obeyed God. Tragically he doesn't

Rehoboam, was Solomon's son, and is an incredibly wicked man, and plunges Israel into new depths of despair.

We'll study both chapters 12-13, and the title of tonight's message is A Nation Divided

Let's pray

1-5

1 And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. 2 So it happened, 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), 3 that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4 "Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the

burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”

5 So he said to them, “Depart for three days, then come back to me.” And the people departed. Jeroboam calls upon Rehoboam to cut taxes. Evidently Solomon had raised taxes to fund his massive building projects all across Israel, and now the citizens are looking for some relief. And the new King Rehoboam said he needs 3 days to ponder his decision.

6-7

6 Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, “How do you advise me to answer these people?” 7 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.” Obviously, some of Solomon’s wisdom had rubbed off on his officials. This is a great lesson for all leaders. If you’ll be a servant to the people, they’ll support you with their service. But Rehoboam isn’t interested in being a servant...

8 But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. 9 And he said to them, “What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us’?” These are Rehoboam's peers - young men who don’t have the wisdom that comes from experience.

10-11

10 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! 11 And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!' "[fn] The young guys want Rehoboam to flex his muscle and show no mercy.

12-15

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day." 13 Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given 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 chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"[fn] 15 So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. As always God was behind the scenes working His will. Civil War was His judgment on Solomon's idolatry.

This is why we don't need to panic at current events!

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD,
Like the rivers of water;
He turns it wherever He wishes.

16 Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying:

"What share have we in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, O Israel!

Now, see to your own house, O David!”

So Israel departed to their tents. Rehoboam’s foolishness made Israel reject him as king, and the entire dynasty of David. They rejected the descendants of Israel’s greatest king. The nation of Israel is now split.

17 But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah. David was from Bethlehem in Judah. His descendents ruled over Judah, the southern kingdom was named after the tribe of “Judah”.

The northern ten tribes broke away from the kings of David, and formed a new nation they named after the father of all 12 tribes, “Israel”

18 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. ” Rehoboam sends out the equivalent of the head of the IRS to talk some sense into the people, but it ends in disaster. The people of Israel are so incensed they stone him, so the king flees to Jerusalem.

19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. From this point on in the history of Israel, the name “Israel” referred to the ten northern tribes and the name “Judah” referred to the southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

There was a long-standing tension between the ten northern tribes and the combined group of Judah and Benjamin. There were two earlier rebellions along this line of division in the days after Absalom's rebellion in 2 Samuel 19

20 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. Originally, the borders of Benjamin were just north of Judah. Yet over the years the Benjamites spent so much time worshiping, visiting, and trading in Jerusalem they lost much of their tribal identity. They became assimilated into the tribe of Judah. Sometimes they're distinguished – but most of the time they are not.

So historically speaking, the year is 920 b.c. The ten northern tribes said, "We are not going to serve Rehoboam. We will follow Jeroboam instead."

Judah, the southern tribe, along with the tiny tribe of Benjamin, said, "We'll stick with Rehoboam."

In the year 726 b.c., the ten northern tribes were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians and were eventually lost. The southern tribe of Judah, along with Benjamin, lasted a bit longer. They lasted until the year 586 when they were carried away by the Babylonians.

The Jews that were carried away into Babylon later on were brought back by Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, and Zerubbabel. They rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple and remained there until

a.d. 70 when the Roman Empire came crashing down, destroying the Jews, and dispersing them throughout the entire known world.

But what's cool is in Ezekiel 37, we find a promise that the Jews will come back once again. We have already seen this happen when the nation of Israel was rebirthed in 1948.

21 And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. When Rehoboam returns home he readies his army.

22-24

22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23 "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, 24 '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. God is sovereign over life - even over negative circumstances. In verse 24 the Lord makes it very clear to Rehoboam, "this thing is from Me." All that occurred was done to fulfill the punishment God pronounced on Solomon's idolatry.

Whenever we fight against the will of God, we'll end up on the losing end of the battle.

Now the focus of the rest of tonight's study shifts to Jeroboam

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Peniel.

Shechem was the geographic center of the northern tribes – it also had a rich history. In Genesis 12 Abraham worshiped God in Shechem. In Genesis 33 Jacob built an altar there. Joseph was buried in Shechem. It was a perfect location for Jeroboam to establish his capital, because Jerusalem was in the territory of Judah and Benjamin.

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.” Even though the nation is now divided, nowhere did God allow the northern tribes from being exempt from their covenant obligations. They were under the Law of Moses as much as the southern tribes, but Jeroboam feared the political implications of yearly trips down to the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Jeroboam seems to forget, or he ignores the promise God made to him through the prophet Ahijah that we saw last week **1 Kings 11:38** 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.

It's amazing how quickly our circumstances cause us to forget God's promises and His word isn't it?

28 Therefore the king asked advice, 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!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. You would think - that of all people - Jeroboam would guard against repeating the sin of Solomon... but he doesn't. He too succumbs to idolatry.

SHOW PIC On our trips to Israel, we visit the very spot where Jeroboam set up his calf. **CLOSE PIC**

To keep people from going to Jerusalem to sacrifice, Jeroboam made two golden calves and said, "These gods brought you out of Egypt."

This probably sounds familiar, remember when Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron made a golden calf **Exodus 32:4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"**

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 He made shrines[fn] on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. Jeroboam made more multiple places of worship throughout the land to appeal to the sense of convenience for the people.

And notice too that Jeroboam rejected the commandments of God regarding the priesthood of Israel, and established a priesthood of his own liking.

32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth 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. ” King Jeroboam establishes his own illegitimate religion – complete with his own altars, his own priesthood, even his own feast days.

33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth 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. Seldom does Satan tempt us with no religion. He knows we're worshippers at heart. Every person has an innate desire to worship God. The temptation though is to set up a religion that suits our own tastes, rather than stay true to God. The enemy waters down the truth to make it palatable.

Sadly, Christians today are repeating this mistake. Plenty of preachers have diluted the doctrines of Christianity – watered down the demands of discipleship. Let's stay faithful to Jesus, even when we have to go out of our way to do so.

CHAPTER 13

In chapter 13 the Lord let's Jeroboam know what He thinks of his religion. An unnamed prophet - he's simply called "a man of God"

pays Jeroboam a visit. And just to warn you, if you're not familiar, this is one of the most bizarre stories in all of the Bible.

1-2

1 And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2 Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' "

Verse 2 is an amazing prediction. A future Judean king, a descendant of David, named "Josiah" - who won't be born for another 300 years, he will bring judgment on the religion of Jeroboam. Josiah will defile this fake altar, and slaughter the priests Jeroboam had appointed.

2 Kings 23:15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image. 16 As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

Think about the courage it took this unnamed man of God to walk onto the king's own turf, and utter these words of judgment. This was a man of God with nerves of steel.

3-5

3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.”

4 So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Arrest him!” Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. Imagine the shock! 5 The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. God confirmed His word of judgment in two ways. First he withers Jeroboam's outstretched hand then God splits the altar-both as proof that God's word will come true.

6 Then the king answered and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” Pause here. Under the evident judgment of God, Jeroboam no longer had a use for golden calves or their altars. He knew that his only hope was in the LORD and in His representative.

As the subsequent chapters will show, Jeroboam didn't really repent here; or if he did, it was only for a moment. Wanting to receive something from God is not the same as repentance.

...6 So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before. Think about the mercy of this unnamed man of God. He quickly moved from being under arrest, to being an intercessor for his persecutor. I doubt

most of us are this quick to show mercy to someone who really wrongs us.

7-10

7 Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." 8 But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. 9 For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.'" 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel. The man of God refused the invitation based on a prior warning from God. And this is where the story becomes shocking...

11-18

11 Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. 12 And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah. 13 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, 14 and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

And he said, "I am."

15 Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread."

16 And he said, "I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. 17

For I have been told by the word of the LORD, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.'

18 He said to him, "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'"

(He was lying to him.) The old prophet cons the young man with the ole "God told me so routine."

Over the years I've had folks try to tell me what God told them I should do. I've always taken the approach, if God spoke to them, He can just as easily speak to me. Nobody wants God's will for my life more than I do. I'll listen to the comment, and pray about it, and usually, I get no confirmation from the Lord that it's His will.

I've learned the hard way that just because a comment gets prefaced "God told me" or "an angel told me" doesn't mean it's necessarily so... God still makes direct calls.

19-22

19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.

20 Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; 21 and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, 22 but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the LORD said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water," your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'"

This is what causes me to shake in my boots. God judged the man of God from Judah far more strictly than He

judged Jeroboam or the prophet from Bethel. It would seem that they were guilty of worse sins (leading national idolatry and a deliberate lying prophecy), yet the man of God received worse judgment.

23 So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. 24 When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. 25 And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. Clearly it was God's judgment

26-32

26 Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him." 27 And he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled it. 28 Then he went and found his corpse thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey. 29 And the prophet took up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him. 30 Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" 31 So it was, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, "When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. 32 For the saying which he cried

out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines[fn] on the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass.” If God hadn’t judged His own prophet for his disobedience, there might have been some doubt about whether God would judge Jeroboam for his rebellion.

In spite of his own unfaithfulness, the old prophet admired his younger friend and gave him as honorable a burial as was possible. This entire, bizarre account illustrates the importance of complete obedience to God's Word. God used the failing of this unnamed man of God to speak powerful truth on Jeroboam, the Israelites, and all who heard about it, as well as us

33 After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. 34 And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth. The prophecy of God's judgment on Jeroboam and its signs back in verses 4-5 didn't lead the king to repentance. In fact, he continues his disregard for God's word by instituting a new priestly system. And without realizing it, he's setting the stage for the nation to be conquered by the Assyrian's 200 years later.