

1 KINGS 12: 25- 33

LEAVING THE WALK OF OBEDIENCE AND FAITH

Last week we saw how God divinely divided the nation of Israel into two nations after Solomon's reign, which had slid into idolatry. Solomon's actions led to widespread idolatry and syncretism in Israel. Now both nations are at a precipice. They can choose to serve YHWH, or they can be like the surrounding nations. We all live daily with the same options. What path will we choose? Will we walk in faith and obedience, or will we choose to live like everyone else?

In this last section of chapter 12, we find the new king, the first king of the new nation of Israel. Remember, the once unified nation of Israel has now split in two. The northern ten tribes are known as Israel, whereas the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who remain around Jerusalem, are known as the nation of Judah.

Jeroboam was promised the kingdom of Israel by God. One of the things you see when tracking with the narrative is that God usually doesn't step in unless He is making a covenant with someone, or someone is messing up the larger plan. Solomon had ruled very poorly, to say the least, and God, through a prophet, had promised to give him the majority of the kingdom.

1 Kings 11: 28 - 40

The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. ²⁹ And at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet ʾAhijah the Shilonite found him on the

road. Now Ahijah had dressed himself in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the open country. ³⁰ Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹ And he said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes ³² (but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), ³³ because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did. ³⁴ Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes. ³⁵ But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand and will give it to you, ten tribes. ³⁶ Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. ³⁷ And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. ³⁸ And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. ³⁹ And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever.’” ⁴⁰

Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

The prophets, when truly sent by God, spoke in God's stead. And that is what Ahijah is doing here. Therefore, God is intervening in Israel's history to put things back on track. How all this would have worked out, we can't know because Jeroboam quickly went off the rails himself. But we can see the promise he was given. And we can see that it was all promised by God. What were the requirements?

And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. ³⁸ And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and I will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.

Jeroboam had only to do as the other kings were to do. He was to walk in God's will, to follow God's commandments and do what was right in the eyes of God. This is what is required of all of us – to live and walk in the will of God. Nonetheless, even a visit from God through the prophet was not enough to keep Jeroboam on track. Let's look at what he did.

***1Kings 12:25** Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.*

- “Building” Shechem and Penuel, two cities that already existed, means that he fortified these cities – built walls and stationed garrisons there, along the main highways and trade routes in southern Israel, in order to secure the southern border.

²⁶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. ²⁷ If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

- Fear and insecurity now enter into Jeroboam’s heart. He is afraid that he will lose the people when they go to Jerusalem in order to worship at the temple.
- Worship, and all that entailed, at least in an official capacity, was to be done in the temple at Jerusalem. That was one thing that got Jesus into hot water with the Sadducees and Pharisees. He healed the sick and most importantly, forgave sin while outside the temple – not even in Jerusalem. I don’t know how God would have solved this problem, other than to still have the people travel to Jerusalem.
- But this dilemma that Jeroboam felt he had, just under-scores a point we will get to later.

²⁸ So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” ²⁹ And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. ³⁰ Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. ³¹ He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. ³² And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. ³³ He

went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

- Look again at verse 28. Does this language ring any bells for you? Golden calves and “Behold your gods who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”
- This is the same action Aaron took and the same words he used while Moses was on Mt. Sinai. That didn’t go well for Aaron or the people and it will have the same effect here.
- Golden calves and storm gods. Syncretism – (define, archaeological finds).
- When we see recurring phrases in the narrative, we are to hyperlink back to the original context and see what happened there. Once again, it didn’t go well for Israel then and won’t go well for them now.
- Built temples – one in Bethel - the south, and one in Dan – the north. This was to make it easier for everyone to get to the temple in order to worship. Makes sense, right? Wrong!
- God’s Spirit, His presence was in the Holy of Holies, and that was where He “resided.” It isn’t until the NT, that we see God’s presence, His Spirit moves from one space, the temple, into all believers, who are temples themselves. We truly live in an awesome time. We, as believers, house, in a sense, the Spirit of God since He resides in us.
- Not only did Jeroboam build unsanctioned temples, he placed idols in them. (Syncretism, defined once again).
- He also built high places – these were common pagan worship centers.

- He appointed priests who weren't from the Levitical line.
- In verse 33, we see that all this came from his own heart.
- And therein lies the problem.

If we were taking a political science class in Jeroboam's day, there are some things that would make perfect sense. First of all, he fortified cities on his southern border. That might have been alright, in the natural sense. That was what kings did. It is logical. But we are working with a different set of rules here. God had already moved in Rehoboam's heart, (King of Judah) not to go to war with the northern tribes in order to prevent their secession. God was moving and He was protecting His plan. That is one of the most basic theological points of the Bible. God will carry the ball across the goal line. He only needs to be consulted, trusted and obeyed.

Jeroboam was moving out fear! That was his soul motivation. And what did he fear? He feared the people returning to Jerusalem to worship. Why did he fear that? He feared they would want to return to a unified kingdom and that he would lose his position. On the surface, those all seem like legitimate concerns. But we cannot overlook the promise – the word from God, whereby God promised him the kingdom, if only he would walk in His statutes and His will.

It has often been said that fear is the opposite of faith – and that is true. There isn't anything wrong with concern. That simply means that you care. But this has gone far past concern. Jeroboam has walked in fear from the get – go.

And what is worse, his fear has taken him down a road of idolatry that can only equal, if not surpass that of Solomon. And that is why

God had to split the nation in the first place! Jeroboam has now compounded the very sin that put him on the throne in the first place! How crazy is that?

The plan was simple – “Walk in my ways, according to my commandments as David did, and I will bless you with this kingdom.”

It was literally that simple. But fear, fear that he would lose the very thing he was promised from God, a kingdom, led him to destroy the very thing he was promised and to repeat the same sins for which he was placed on the throne in the first place.

Let that sink in for a minute.

What fear can do to us.

Fear creates anxiety, as we have seen in the life of Jeroboam. It creates chaos and stagnation, as it paralyzes us. It affects those around us as it stifles our thinking and productivity. It can drive people to destructive habits such as drugs and alcohol as they seek artificial relief. It can cause depression. The bottom line is that it drives us to the very opposite of what God wants for us – an abundant life that shows us others how an imager of God can live, in order that others can see what living for God means! It, fear, literally is diametrically opposed to faith.

And we have here, an object lesson, in the life of a king. Fear drove him to be the opposite of what God wanted for Him and His people, Israel. And it can/ will do the very same thing for any of us.

When God promises you something, and I'm not talking about any sort of "name it and claim it theology." But I am talking about the mission on which God has given each and every one of us, we have to live according to what God has said! And it doesn't have to be difficult! We are to read His word, just as the kings of Israel were to do. We are to be in that word constantly. And from that we get our marching orders! But it doesn't stop there. We are to walk/ live in that word. God is not so impressed with an intellectual faith that knows things, when that knowledge does not translate into action. The concepts and precepts of God are to govern our live and how we deal with others! God's Word is to be lived out, not merely understood. We cannot live in fear! We must live in faith!

Mt. 6: 25 - 34

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?
²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,
²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’
³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
³³ But seek

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt. 6:34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Fear, the lack of faith, will rob us not only of peace, but will keep us from living our lives the way we are meant to live them. Fear will have us living like a deer in headlights.

Not walking according to faith, and God’s statutes – kingdom principles, will send us down the path of Jeroboam and most likely bring us to the same end.

Walk in the Word and the power of His Spirit! He resides within you! Trust in Him, that He will carry the ball across the goal line. All we have to do is trust and obey!