

Chapter Twenty Two – The Kingdom is Divided

After Solomon had been reigning for four years, he began preparations for building the Temple. All the time when the Temple was being built, there was no sound of hammer and axe. Everything fitted perfectly in its place. All the walls were covered with rich cedar planks and everything in the Temple was covered with pure gold and nailed with gold nails. The whole work took seven years. When everything was completed, the Ark of God was brought into the Temple and placed into the Holy of Holies, that is, the place prepared for it. The High Priest came out and closed the place with curtains, and no one was allowed to go inside except the High Priest himself, and that only once a year. After the construction of the Temple, Solomon also built a palace for himself and the project took another thirteen years.

The last days of Solomon were very sad. Although he was so clever and had built the Temple for God, he became bad and married pagan wives. He even built shrines for their gods and worshipped in them. God was very displeased with him and said to him in a dream that part of his kingdom would be taken away from his family line and be given to his servant Jeroboam. At the same time, the people were grumbling because of Solomon's heavy taxes. One day Jeroboam met the prophet Ahijah. Ahijah took his new cloak and tore it into twelve pieces. He gave Jeroboam ten pieces and said, "God is going to divide the kingdom of Solomon when he dies. You will get ten tribes. You will be king of the new kingdom of Israel." When Solomon heard about this, he ordered Jeroboam to be arrested, but Jeroboam escaped to Egypt where he stayed until Solomon died.

Solomon reigned for forty years and was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. When Jeroboam heard of this, he at once returned from Egypt. Before accepting Rehoboam as king, Jeroboam led all the people to meet the new king. Jeroboam, speaking for them said to Rehoboam, "Your father, King Solomon, was a very hard king. We had to work for him and to pay heavy taxes. If you will lessen these taxes and rule us kindly, we will all serve you well."

Rehoboam then called the wise men of his father and asked for their advice. "Just listen to them and they will be your faithful servants," they told him. Then he went to his young friends who were foolish and asked them for their advice. "You should not listen to them. Show them how powerful you are. Tell them that you will be even harder than your father. You must tax them more heavily. Instead of a whip that your father beat them with, you must beat them with a scorpion."

Rehoboam foolishly listened to the young men. The people were very angry when they heard him and Jeroboam shouted, "All those tribes who want to join me stand on my side." At once ten tribes joined him. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained. In this way David's kingdom was divided. The two tribes formed the kingdom of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and the ten tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). The capital of Judah was Jerusalem while the capital of Israel was the town of Samaria.



Solomon dedicates the Temple to God

Questions:

1. How did Solomon try to make the Temple a suitable house for God?
2. In what ways did Solomon fall away from God?
3. Give ONE way to show how Solomon was a successful king.
4. How did Rehoboam show that he did not have the wisdom of his father?
5. In daily life, how might some teenagers ignore good advice?
6. How was the kingdom divided?