

THE STORY

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 14: A Kingdom Torn in Two

Key Question: Why is it important to do what is right in God's eyes?

Rehoboam's Folly

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After Solomon died, the people gathered to crown his son, Rehoboam, king. They asked him to lighten their taxes and labor laws.

1. (a) What advice did the experienced elders give Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:7)? (b) How did Rehoboam respond (12:8)? (c) What does this tell us about Rehoboam? (d) Do you think it is important for leaders to be servants? Explain.

2. (a) Whose advice did Rehoboam take (1 Kings 12:13)? (b) What does Rehoboam's answer tell us about him (12:14)? (c) How did the northern tribes respond to him (12:19–20)? (d) What can we learn about seeking advice from Rehoboam's mistakes?

The kingdom that David and Solomon had so carefully built split in two. The kingdom to the south became known as Judah,¹⁶⁴ and the kingdom to the north Israel.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ The kingdom of Judah contained the tribes of Judah and Simeon, and part of Benjamin. By the time Israel divided, the large tribe of Judah had absorbed the small tribe of Simeon in its midst, which is why the prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam God would give him ten tribes, leaving David's dynasty "one" (1 Kings 11:31–32).

¹⁶⁵ Prophets often called the northern kingdom Ephraim after the large tribe from which its first king, Jeroboam, came.

Jeroboam's Idolatry

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During Solomon's reign, the prophet Ahijah had told Jeroboam that God was going to take ten tribes away from Solomon's son and give them to Jeroboam to rule. He made him this promise: "If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."¹⁶⁶

Just as God promised, the northern tribes crowned Jeroboam king.

3. (a) According to 1 Kings 12:26–27, what did Jeroboam fear? (b) What does this show about his trust in God's promise to him? (c) What did Jeroboam try to stop the people from doing (12:28)? (d) What does this tell us about his priorities?

After Jeroboam sought advice, he placed one golden calf in Bethel on the main road to Jerusalem and the other in Dan, near Israel's northern border. He broke the Second Commandment: "You shall not make for yourself an idol."¹⁶⁷

4. (a) Jeroboam's advisors told him to disobey God's command. What does this tell us about the advisors (12:28)? (b) What did people do with the calves (12:30)? (c) Jeroboam ignored Psalm 1:1: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked." What can we learn about seeking advice from Jeroboam's mistakes?

5. (a) According to 1 Kings 12:31, what else did Jeroboam build? (b) What types of priests did he appoint? (c) What did Jeroboam do that only priests were permitted to do (12:33)?

¹⁶⁶ 1 Kings 11:38.

¹⁶⁷ Exodus 20:4–6.

Since Jeroboam wouldn't let Levites perform their priestly duties, many of them moved to Judah.¹⁶⁸ Other God-fearing Israelites soon followed.¹⁶⁹

6. How do you think the loss of priests and godly people affected Israel?

When Jeroboam's son Abijah became ill, the queen went to Ahijah, the prophet who had told Jeroboam he would be king.¹⁷⁰ The prophet gave her a message to take back to her husband.

7. (a) Who had made Jeroboam king (1 Kings 14:8)? (b) God had promised to build Jeroboam a lasting dynasty if he kept God's commands. What did Jeroboam do instead (14:8–9)? (c) Because of this, what was God going to do (14:10)?

8. (a) Why would young Abijah die (14:13)? (b) Isaiah 57:1 says, "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil." From what was the boy Abijah being spared (14:11, 14:14)?

The very steps Jeroboam took to secure a dynasty doomed it. Although he passed the throne to a son, a rebel soon overthrew it.

¹⁶⁸ 2 Chronicles 11:14. Note that 1 & 2 Kings tell the stories of both Israel and Judah, while 2 Chronicles tells the story of only Judah.

¹⁶⁹ 2 Chronicles 11:16–18.

¹⁷⁰ Some of these names can be confusing! *Abijah* is spelled with a *b* as in **boy**, while *Ahijah* is spelled with an *h*, as is **prophet**.

Judah's Kings

Pages 198–201

Back in Judah to the south, Solomon's son Rehoboam abandoned God too, but unlike his northern counterpart, he repented after a prophet's rebuke.¹⁷¹ His son's short reign (see the timeline on the last page) was half-hearted towards God. But his grandson, Asa, sought God and tried to reverse the problems his father and grandfather caused.

9. (a) According to 1 Kings 15:12–15, what did Asa king of Judah do? (b) Why (15:15)? (c) In contrast, his grandfather Rehoboam “did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.”¹⁷² How can you set your heart on seeking the Lord?

Israel's Kings

Pages 201–202

Meanwhile, in Israel to the north things weren't going well. The rebel Baasha overthrew the throne. Godly Israelites compared the waywardness of their King Baasha to the devotion of Judah's King Asa and even more moved south to Judah.¹⁷³

10. (a) What did Baasha king of Israel do about the defections (1 Kings 15:17)? (b) What should Baasha have done instead?

Israel's kings suffered a series of assassinations¹⁷⁴ that plunged the new nation into turmoil.

Finally the people crowned the powerful army commander, Omri, as king of Israel. Omri fortified a strategic hill and built a magnificent royal city on it, which he named Samaria.¹⁷⁵ Unfortunately, God wasn't his priority.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ 2 Chronicles 12:5–6.

¹⁷² 2 Chronicles 12:14.

¹⁷³ 2 Chronicles 15:9.

¹⁷⁴ Nadab, Elah, Zimri, and probably Tibni.

¹⁷⁵ 1 Kings 16:24. During the time of the divided kingdom, the prophets sometimes used the names *Samaria* and *Jerusalem* to refer to Israel and Judah respectively because they were the seats of power, just as in politics we sometimes use *Washington* and *Moscow* to refer to the United States and Russia.

And then came Ahab.

11. (a) What was Ahab king of Israel like (1 Kings 16:30)? (b) Whom did he marry (16:31)?
 (c) Jezebel’s father was Ethbaal, the king of Tyre and Sidon and a priest of Baal. What did Ahab build and set up in the royal city, Samaria (16:32)?

Ahab also worshiped the goddess Asherah (16:33). Queen Jezebel wanted Baal to be Israel’s national god and began killing the Lord’s prophets.¹⁷⁷ Ahab king of Israel didn’t stop her.

12. What was God’s reaction (1 Kings 16:33)?

Things looked bleak for Israel. But God wasn’t done with her. Next week we’ll see how God miraculously intervened to let his people know that he was indeed God.

Let’s pause to take a bird’s eye view of the divided kingdoms.

In the Eyes of the Lord

Chart

The kings in Israel and Judah were supposed to be servants of God who implemented justice and led people to follow God so all nations would know God. But most didn’t embrace that role.

The Bible sums up the kings’ lives according to whether they did right “in the eyes of the Lord.” They may have done right in their own eyes—most people do—but that wasn’t the basis upon which their lives were judged.

The upcoming chart lists the passages that summarize kings’ lives.¹⁷⁸ The gold rows show the kings of Judah, and the white rows show the kings of Israel. Keep this chart handy for your next few lessons.

Legend	
✖	King assassinated
≠	Kingdom divided under two rulers
⊖	King dethroned by foreign power

¹⁷⁶ 1 Kings 16:25.

¹⁷⁷ 1 Kings 18:4.

¹⁷⁸ Dates are from the 1985 edition of *The NIV Study Bible* (Zondervan). Where dates in a single dynasty overlap, a father and son co-reigned.

13. Turn to the verses in the *Passage* column, and then check the box that best summarizes each king's life. (a) Judah had twenty kings. How many of them did right in God's eyes (gold rows)? (b) Israel had 20 kings too. How many of them did right in God's eyes (white rows)? (c) What does this tell us about the kingdoms?

14. Look at the *Dynasty* column.¹⁷⁹ (a) How many dynasties did Judah have (gold rows)? (b) How many dynasties did Israel have (white rows)? (c) What does this tell us about the stability of the two kingdoms' governments? (d) What conclusions can we draw from the *Notes* column?

Second Corinthians 10:18 says, "For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends."

15. Which of these descriptions would best describe your actions? Why?

- Seek to find out what is right in the eyes of the Lord and then do it
- Do what I feel is right in eyes of the Lord
- Do what my friends or family think is right
- Do what I want (I can always ask for forgiveness)
- Other _____

16. (a) How do you want your life to be summed up? (b) What steps can you take to ensure that what you want will happen?

¹⁷⁹ A king who overthrew the throne but was unable to pass it on to a son had no dynasty.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Reign*</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>King in Judah</i>	<i>Right Evil</i>	<i>King in Israel</i>	<i>Right Evil</i>	<i>Dynasty</i>
1 Ki 14:22	930–913		Rehoboam	☐☐			David
1 Ki 14:9	930–909				Jeroboam I	☐☐	Jeroboam
1 Ki 15:3	913–910		Abijah	☐☐			David
1 Ki 15:11	910–869		Asa	☐☐			David
1 Ki 15:26	909–908	✂			Nadab	☐☐	Jeroboam
1 Ki 15:34	908–886				Baasha	☐☐	Baasha
1 Ki 16:13	886–885	✂			Elah	☐☐	Baasha
1 Ki 16:19	885	✂			Zimri	☐☐	—
1 Ki 16:21–22	885–880	✂ ≠			Tibni	—	—
1 Ki 16:25	885–874	≠			Omri	☐☐	Omri
1 Ki 16:30	874–853				Ahab	☐☐	Omri
1 Ki 22:43	872–848		Jehoshaphat	☐☐			David
1 Ki 22:52	853–852				Ahaziah	☐☐	Omri
2 Ki 3:2	852–841	✂			Joram	☐☐	Omri
2 Ki 8:18	848–841		Jehoram	☐☐			David
2 Ki 8:27	841	✂	Ahaziah	☐☐			David
2 Ki 10:31	841–814				Jehu	☐☐	Jehu
2 Ki 11:1	841–835	✂	Athaliah	☐☐			—
2 Ki 12:2	835–796	✂	Joash	☐☐			David
2 Ki 13:2	814–798				Jehoahaz	☐☐	Jehu
2 Ki 13:11	798–782				Jehoash	☐☐	Jehu
2 Ki 14:3	796–787	✂	Amaziah	☐☐			David
2 Ki 14:24	793–753				Jeroboam II	☐☐	Jehu
2 Ki 15:3	792–740		Azariah	☐☐			David
2 Ki 15:9	753	✂			Zechariah	☐☐	Jehu
2 Ki 15:15	752	✂			Shallum	☐☐	—
2 Ki 15:18	752–742	≠			Menahem	☐☐	Menahem
2 Ki 15:24	742–740	✂ ≠			Pekahiah	☐☐	Menahem
2 Ki 15:28	752–732	✂ ≠			Pekah	☐☐	—
2 Ki 15:34	750–732		Jotham	☐☐			David
2 Ki 16:2–3	735–715		Ahaz	☐☐			David
2 Ki 17:2	732–722	⊙			Hoshea	☐☐	—
2 Ki 18:3	715–686		Hezekiah	☐☐			David
2 Ki 21:2	697–642		Manasseh	☐☐			David
2 Ki 21:20	642–640	✂	Amon	☐☐			David
2 Ki 22:2	640–609		Josiah	☐☐			David
2 Ki 23:32	609	⊙	Jehoahaz	☐☐			David
2 Ki 23:37	609–598		Jehoiakim	☐☐			David
2 Ki 24:9	598–597	⊙	Jehoiachin	☐☐			David
2 Ki 24:19	597–586	⊙	Zedekiah	☐☐			David

Timeline: Kings of Israel & Judah (930–850 BC)

