

Session 3: Decline

Scripture questions:

1 Kings 12:1-5

Here are a few facts that will help you understand the story. First, King Solomon, the Son of David and father of Rehoboam, has died. Second, Jeroboam was a military leader under Solomon who unsuccessfully tried to rebel, and then ran away. Before the Israelites confirm Rehoboam as king, what do they ask of him? What does this say about the kind of king Solomon was?

How does this remind you of Samuel's warning in 1 Samuel 8:10-18? Why do you think the Israelites brought Jeroboam with them?

1 Kings 12:6-20

What advice do the elders give Rehoboam?

What advice do Rehoboam's young friends give him?

Whose advice does Rehoboam follow? What are the results?

1 Kings 15:32-34

2 Kings 13:10-13

2 Kings 15:1-7

What patterns do you see in the different accounts of these three kings? What determines a good or bad king?

1 Chronicles 29:26-30

What kind of description does this passage give us of King David? How is the tone different from the readings in the last session from the book of Samuel?

2 Kings 17:5-23

2 Chronicles 36:13-17

How do these passages describe the destruction of Israel? What is the ultimate cause of their destruction?

The last book in the Hebrew Bible is 2 Chronicles. (Note: The Hebrew Bible is the same as our Old Testament in content, but the ordering of books is different.) Why do you think this book, and this passage, was placed last in the Hebrew Bible?

The Exile: A 70-year period when the Babylonians conquered the Israelites, forcibly taking them elsewhere. This is the second most important event in Israel's history (the Exodus was the first).

The period following the split of the Israelites is called the **Divided Kingdom**. This is when the 12 tribes of Israel divided. Before the division, there is only one Israel. After the division, there are two nations: Israel and Judah. The book of Kings tells us the history of both kingdoms to emphasize how these two nations are divided, but are still united as one people. The story of Jeroboam and Rehoboam tell us of the division as well as give us insight into biblical leadership.

The Northern Kingdom: Jeroboam was king over the northern half of the land called “Israel.” He reigned over 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel.

The Southern Kingdom: Rehoboam was king over the southern half of the land called “Judah.” He reigned over the other 2 tribes of Israel.

The **continuous problem among the Israelites** while they were ruled by a king was idolatry. They repeatedly turned to the worship of other gods: Baal, Molech, and Ishtar.

The cause of the Exile was not military defeat, but lack of faithfulness to God. God removed His protective hand, allowing the Assyrians and Babylonians to conquer the Israelites and their land. This reminds us today of the consequences of idolatry and the importance of faithfulness to God.

Application Questions:

In 1 Kings 12:7, Rehoboam is told, “if today you will be a servant to these people...they will always be your servants.” How is this model of leadership different from present-day views of leadership and power? How is this model of leadership expressed in your family or your work?

As seen in the book of Kings, the central failure of the kings of Israel was their inability to lead the people spiritually, and their unwillingness to rid the country of idolatry. Their idolatry was referenced as “high places” in the book of Kings. Even the best kings still allowed sin to remain a visible presence in the land. Do you allow existence of “high places” to those you lead spiritually? In what ways can you offer strong spiritual leadership to those around you?

The Exile occurred because of the Israelites’ repeated failure to respond to God because of their hardened hearts. In what ways do you also harden your heart against the will and leadership of God? How can you avoid this?