

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 51
Week 51 – 1 Kings 10-14; 2 Chronicles 9-12

Key Concepts: the focus of these chapters is on the negative consequences of unfaithfulness to God caused by the forgetfulness of the leaders.

Stories: in 1 Kings we begin with the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (and an exchange of gifts), an accounting of Solomon's wealth, Solomon's wives leading him astray to worship other gods, God's condemnation of Solomon, God raising up adversaries against Solomon, the rise of Jeroboam, Solomon's death and the beginning of the reign of his son Rehoboam, Rehoboam's poor choices, the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam's political decision which cost him the favor of God, a strange story about two prophets, the death of one of Jeroboam's sons, Jeroboam's death and the coming to the throne of his son Nadab, Judah's evil, the conquest of Judah by Egypt and the civil war between Israel and Judah. 2 Chronicles follows the same basic path but does not mention Solomon's apostasy and tries to spin the stories so Judah comes off in a better light than that shown in Kings.

Brief Summary: The stories in this section of the scriptures show one of the great turning points in the history of God's people. The kingdom had been united for about seventy years. Evidently this was not enough time for the various tribal groups to see themselves as one people. The initial melding of the tribes occurred around the charismatic figure of David. It was held together by the power exerted by Solomon. Unfortunately Solomon also sowed the seeds of destruction by conscripting Israelites to work on his various projects. This was deeply resented. However, it could have been overcome had Solomon's son, Rehoboam, listened to the older men and granted a bit more freedom to the northern tribes. Instead he listened to his young friends who had grown up with power and privilege. By insisting on becoming more oppressive than his father, he drove the northern tribes into the hands of Jeroboam.

Jeroboam was, as the story tells us, a very competent and charismatic leader. Having been told by a prophet that God had selected him to lead this new northern nation, he moved to immediately secure his position...which he would retain for twenty-two years. His boldest, and most politically astute move, was to use two ancient worship sites, Bethel and Dan, as the religious centers for northern worship. Each of these sites had a long history of use by the Israelite people. Jeroboam knew that without local worship sites, and priests to serve them, the people would slowly but surely gravitate back to Jerusalem and fall under the authority of Judah and its king. The mistake he made, according to the scriptures, was that rather than worshipping YHWH at those sites, he created two golden calves (becoming twice as bad as the people in the wilderness) and declared that those were the gods of the north. This action would become the ultimate reason for the elimination of Jeroboam's family line.

Religious syncretism also overtakes Judah. Solomon's worship of other gods opens the doors for the Israelites to worship other deities at multiple "high places." This worship included male cult prostitution. The punishment for these crimes is defeat at the hands of the Egyptians. This defeat allowed the Egyptians to strip the Temple and Palace of its gold. It is a clear message that the glory and wisdom once given to Solomon were lost. Judah and Israel had become warring siblings who cannot remember all that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had done for them.

One final observation; note how Chronicles does not mention Solomon's worshipping other gods. This is consistent with Chronicles attempt to paint the Davidic line in as good a light as possible/

1. Where do you see power abused today as it was abused by Solomon and Rehoboam?
2. Why do you think that God was not happy with a multi-religious society in Israel and Judah?
3. What are some of the "high places" at which we worship today?