

June 2

1 Kings 13-15; 2 Chronicles 11-13

Even after a clear warning from God through his prophets, Jeroboam continues his wickedness and sin. HE's still appointing his own priests and driving the nation towards destruction. Jeroboams' son gets sick and interestingly Jeroboam wants to go to God's prophet. He knew the prophet didn't approve of his actions so he secretly sends his wife.

The prophet gives a stern rebuke saying "I gave you this kingdom but instead of being like David and leading the people to follow my commands, you've led people away and you've made gods and you've thrown me behind you back." And he pronounces disaster on his family and on his people. And of course he lost his son.

None of his descendents would survive because of his evil ways and because he provoked God. We have a tragic picture here of what happens to Israel because of Jeroboams' abandonment of the Lord.

Now, we flash back to what's happening in Judah. Solomon's son Rehoboam builds up his kingdom and raises a large family. But it isn't long before we see him – after he becomes strong, he begins to wander away from God. In 1 Chronicles 12:14 says "he did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord." This summarizes his spiritual journey and it indicates that we can't be neutral. You are either pursuing God or you are doing evil. You are pursuing the world. As a result, there was idol worship and even prostitution of the worst kind. They were doing the same thing that the nations they drove out were doing. They were doing the same evil practices.

Now, because of this evil, God used Shishak to attack Jerusalem. He had both his troops and higher troops capture the fortified cities of Jerusalem. As Shishak's armies were approaching Judah, the prophet Shimiah says, "you have abandoned me, so I'm abandoning you." The leaders of Israel and the King realized the prophet was right and they humbled themselves. They were also humbled by the Egyptian army, because the Gold shields that Solomon made in the temple of the goldan palace were taken. The gold shields were replaced with bronze ones – symbolizing the loss of the glory that Israel once had.

So, after 17 years, Rehoboam dies. He was 41 when he became King and he reigned 17 years – he died young. His son Abijah becomes King and he had an even shorter reign. During this whole time, there was conflict between the Divided Kingdoms. Finally, there is one major conflict between the armies of Israel and Judah, Abijah announced his allegiance to God, and rebuked Israel from turning away from the worship of the Lord. Jeroboam proclaimed his dependence on God. " God is with us – he is our leader," Abijah says.

Even though Abijah was out maneuvered and outnumbered by Jeraboams' forces, the Lord came to their rescue. It says they killed 500,000 of Israel's men. This

greatly weakened Jeroboams' military power. While Abijah appeared to be a devout follower of God, it goes on to say that his heart was not devout toward God. He sinned the same as his father.

These stories are a picture of what happens when people lost their devotion, their fire, or their desire for God. And I think an application for us is to be aware of complacency. Rehoboam wasn't totally evil – he just didn't follow God. It wasn't that he didn't believe in God, he just hadn't set his heart wholeheartedly on seeking the Lord. If you would have asked him, he would have said "yea, I'm a good Jew." He just didn't have the desire to pursue God. In Jeroboam's case, it appears that he had a heart set against following God. He wanted God's help when his son was sick – but other than that, his heart was totally disobedient to God.

Just like the shields went from gold to bronze, the glory of God is greatly diminished in our own lives when we settle for less than the full pursuit of God.

At the very end of our reading, we have a reference back to David to show God's faithfulness. It says, "In spite of all these things, God was faithful to raise up kings to fulfill his promise."