

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 9

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

The nation of Israel was then divided into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom comprising ten tribes would be known as Israel; the Southern Kingdom comprising two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) would be known as Judah. Each kingdom had its own king. Israel's first king was Jeroboam I, the son of Nebat. Judah's first king was Rehoboam. For a period of 345 years from the time of the divided kingdom (930-586 B.C.), eight of the 19 kings of Judah were commended as "good" whereas Israel's 20 kings were all condemned as "evil". It is sad that most of the kings were self seeking; very few of them walked in the ways of the LORD.

In His dealings with King Jeroboam, God revealed that He is very patient. In many ways, God was merciful to him and had warned him to repent but he did not heed the warning. The same was true of King Rehoboam.

Chapter 14 features the last days of Jeroboam. His pleas to save his favourite son, the crown prince,

ended in failure. In addition, he was told of God's judgement upon him and his descendants. The latter part of chapter 14 describes Rehoboam's reign in Judah. Chapter 15 features the reigns of Abijam (Rehoboam's son) and Asa (Rehoboam's grandson).

Throughout the Book of Kings, it is observed that parental influence played a very important part in the moulding of a child's character. We see how a man led his family and nation to ruin. We learn that God is interested in our relationship with Him, not in our worldly accomplishments.

OUTLINE

1. Seeking God only when in trouble
vv.1-20;
2. Rehoboam's Reign in Judah
(vv.21-31)

COMMENTARY

**Seeking God only when
in trouble 14:1-20**

The opening verse of chapter 14 states that Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, was sick. We do not know the details of his ailment. The name Abijah means "my father is Yahweh". This may imply that he was born at a time when his father acknowledged the LORD God of Israel. It could also be because his father showed much concern for him, the crown prince.

Jeroboam remembered Ahijah, the prophet who had prophesied to him that the nation Israel would be divided into two and that he would be the king

of the Northern Kingdom (11:30, 31). Since then he had never asked Ahijah for God's guidance or direction in his life. Now that his favourite son's life was threatened, he wished to seek his help. However, instead of going personally, he decided to send his wife. We do not know much about his wife. Her name was not even recorded. She was submissive to her husband's wishes and agreed to go to the prophet. Although the reason for not going to Ahijah personally was not stated, we can venture a few possible reasons

First, he could be too proud to make the trip to Shiloh where Ahijah lived. Since the day he became king, except for the time when he pleaded to the "man of God from Judah" to heal his withering arm, he had not sought the LORD'S will nor prayed for spiritual discernment. He also did not ask the LORD to make him a godly man. Secondly, he could be too ashamed to plead for mercy having realised his careless attitude towards God. In order to avoid any public scandal, he sent his wife and in disguise! Thirdly, it could be his fear of any direct encounter with Ahijah who might challenge him in the name of God. Fourthly, by sending his wife in disguise, their true identity could be hidden and Ahijah may give her a favourable word from the LORD. Hence he also told his wife to bring a gift of food for the prophet which was a modest gift and would allay any suspicion that it had come from the royal purse.

Jeroboam's wife obediently did as told (14:4). She went to Shiloh, which was about 28 kilometres south of Tirzah (Jeroboam had made it his capital city). Humanly, it would have been difficult for Ahijah to recognise Jeroboam's wife as his eyesight was failing due to old age. However, before she appeared, the LORD told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife would be coming in disguise with the intention of pleading for her sick son. The LORD instructed Ahijah what he should say to her. Hence, the moment Jeroboam's wife stepped through the door of the prophet's residence, Ahijah exposed her real identity and informed her that he had "heavy" news for her.

Indeed, the message from the LORD for Jeroboam was grave. Firstly, Jeroboam was reminded of God's grace. God had exalted him from among the people and made him the king over His people in Israel, the Northern Kingdom. God required him to be like David, to keep His commandments and to follow Him with all his heart and do what was right in His eyes (14:7, 8).

Secondly, the LORD charged Jeroboam with his sins. Ahijah highlighted several of them. He had done evil above all who were before him. He had made other gods and images which angered the LORD. He had "cast" the LORD behind his back. The verb translated "cast" was a word used to describe God's forgiveness of a believer's sins¹-- God put the sins

¹ Isaiah 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou **hast cast all my sins behind thy back**.

behind His back once the believer had repented which was good news. But the verb used in the present context was a serious charge against Jeroboam. He had ignored God, and hurled Him away (14:9)

Thirdly, God would bring disaster upon the “house” of Jeroboam and would remove every male (“he that pisseth against the wall”) of Jeroboam’s descendants just like a man would dispose of “dung”. Their deaths would be dishonourable. Those who died in the city would have their bodies mutilated by dogs, while those who died in the fields would be devoured by birds. What the LORD had spoken would surely come to pass. The first sign of the veracity of His word would be the death of Jeroboam’s son the very moment his wife returned home. All Israel would mourn for him and bury him. Of all the members of Jeroboam’s family, he would be the only one to be buried in the grave because some good thing was found in him toward the LORD God of Israel (14:10-13). God showed mercy and spared him from the evil days ahead.

Fourthly, the LORD would raise another king over Israel. This king would destroy the “house” of Jeroboam. The nation Israel would be weak like a “reed shaken in the water” and it would be rooted out of the land and the people scattered “beyond the river”. The river referred to was the Euphrates. This judgement upon Israel was because the people had turned away from the LORD to the worship of idols, provoking the LORD to anger.

The LORD would give Israel up because Jeroboam had sinned and made Israel sin.

Jeroboam’s wife stood up and departed for home. She did not talk at all during the meeting with Ahijah. She came, she heard, she left and when she reached home, her son passed away. We can feel pity for this woman. What could she possibly say? Her husband should have come to Ahijah personally to face the music, instead of leaving her to carry the heavy burden of a message of doom, and to bear the grief of the impending death of her son.

Verses 19 and 20 made mere mention of Jeroboam’s war accomplishments and his reign of 22 years, after which he was succeeded by his son Nadab. No details of these military and political successes were provided. They did not matter to God. God is concerned with the faithfulness of His servants and people.² He is more interested in whether Jeroboam was obedient to the covenant made.

Rehoboam’s Reign in Judah – 14:21-31

Rehoboam was 41 years old when he was first made king. He ruled for 17 years (930 to 913 B.C.). His palace was in Jerusalem, the city which the

² 1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to **obey is better than** sacrifice, *and* to hearken **than** the fat of rams.

LORD had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel.

Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess. She was not an Israelite. The fact that Solomon chose Rehoboam as his successor tells us that she must have been the favourite from among his many wives and concubines. This served as a reminder to us that Solomon's alliance with these unbelieving foreign women was one of the causes of the spiritual and moral decline of the nation. Naamah who mothered Rehoboam must have had a great influence on his upbringing.

Rehoboam was a bad king. His deeds were not right in the eyes of the LORD. He was idolatrous like his father—like father like son. He committed sins above those of his father and grandfather so much so that his sins of idolatry provoked the LORD God to righteous jealousy. He sanctioned the building of high places, the making of images, the setting up of sacred stones, and "groves" on "every high hill and under every green tree" (14:23). The word "groves" means a cluster of trees usually oak where religious pagan practices were performed. It is used in Scripture to indicate the pagan goddess Asherah. The Canaanites set up altars in "groves" of trees and used the tree trunk as a cult symbol. These cult symbols on every hill and tree suggested that Rehoboam outdid Jeroboam in idolatrous worship. In addition there were also "sodomites" in the land. This was a reference to unnatural sex, especially

homosexuality. The name Sodomy or homosexuality derived its label from the inhabitants of Sodom during the time of Abraham and Lot. The male inhabitants of Sodom were bent on homosexuality, and because of such sins, the LORD condemned the city to destruction (Genesis 19:24, 25). In the case of Judah, the "sodomites" were cult male prostitutes in the high places and groves to satisfy the male worshippers' homosexual tendencies.

The Canaanites believed that their gods and goddesses were responsible for the fertility of the land. When male or female cult prostitutes engaged in sex, the intention was to sexually stimulate their deities hence blessing them with a fertile land or cattle or fishes. [Note that modern versions like the NIV have removed the word "sodomites" and replaced it with "temple prostitutes". One of the translators of the NIV was a lady named Virginia Mollencott,³ a self confessed lesbian]

This was an abomination to the LORD. Rehoboam allowed these cultic practices in Judah. Within five years of his reign, Judah had plunged

³“The NIV is one of the most corrupt Bibles on the market today. It is known as the gay Bible because it subtly supports the homosexual lifestyle. The reason for this is because on the NIV committee there was an outspoken Lesbian by the name of Virginia Mollencott. She wrote two books. The one titled, "Is the homosexual my neighbor," and the other is entitled, "Sensual Spirituality." In the latter book she calls God in the feminine. In other words every time she references God, she uses "her," "she," or any other feminist classification. The reason is because she believes that God is a woman, and that women are to rule. Check out I Corinthians 7:1-3. Compare this with the King James.”

into the depths of spiritual darkness and apostasy. It took only one man in a position of influence to bring about disaster and destruction to all the people. Rehoboam had followed in the footsteps of his father Solomon and had now surpassed him.

Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem. His raids into Palestine in the year 925 B.C. were attested to by the reliefs in the Amon temple at Thebes, Egypt. Shishak had been watching the developments in Solomon's kingdom. He had given refuge to Jeroboam when the latter had fled to Egypt from Solomon. Sishak observed that his ally Jeroboam was now the king of Israel, comprising the ten tribes of the North whereas Judah was made up of only two tribes in the South. Shishak saw that Rehoboam did not have the strength of his father, Solomon. Instead, he was thoughtless and a weakling. So Shishak and his armies marched into Jerusalem.

Rehoboam and his people presented no resistance at all. Sishak and his men took away all the treasures of the Temple and also the treasures of the king's palace. They took the shields of gold which Solomon had made. They plundered Jerusalem. Jeroboam and the people in the north did not come to their rescue. Shishak came, he saw, he entered, he plundered and he took off. Rehoboam replaced the shields of gold with bronze which was an inferior metal.

The inspired writer ends with a summary mention of Rehoboam's deeds which were written in the book

of chronicles of the kings of Judah. These books of chronicles must not be confused with the two books of Chronicles in the Old Testament. There were frequent wars between Israel and Judah in the reign of the two kings. We see brothers fighting against brothers. This happened because they did not walk in the ways of the LORD their God. When Rehoboam died, he was buried in the city of David and was succeeded by his son Abijam.

PRACTICAL VALUE

God gave Jeroboam the opportunity to lead the ten tribes but he did not keep the commandments nor did he walk as David did. God was very patient with him and gave him many chances to repent. God warned him countless number of times and in different ways -- through the judgement of Solomon, through the direct rebuke from "the man of God from Judah", through the splitting of the pagan cultic altar, through the withering of his hand when he raised it against "the man of God from Judah", through the judging of "the man of God from Judah" when he failed to return to Judah immediately upon the completion of his mission, through the illness and the death of his son, Abijah and finally through the prophet Ahijah. Yet Jeroboam would not listen and repent. This is an important lesson for all of us. We should reflect on whether there are any signs or warnings from God. If there are, let us not procrastinate to the point of no return or it will mean inescapable judgement.

The action of a single person can exert a strong influence on others. David’s adultery was a bad example for Solomon who later took many wives. Solomon’s idolatry caused his son Rehoboam to even outdo Jeroboam in the practice of idolatry and sodomy. Albert Schweitzer, the doctor missionary to Africa aptly commented: “Not one of us knows what effect we may be having or what we may be giving to other persons. It is hidden from us and shall remain so. Often we are permitted to see a very little portion of this, so that we may not become discouraged. Power works in mysterious ways.” We must learn this lesson well. Our children are, at all times, watching us and they learn by example from a young age. What we do in church, in the office and in the school exert some influence on them as well as others. Is our character and conduct a source of encouragement and inspiration to others or are we sowing destruction? Beware lest we lead others astray. AMEN.

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 14:25-31; Isaiah 51:7; Matthew 10:28.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Jeroboam was called to be king while Ahijah was called to be a prophet. What are the differences, if any, in the way that they carried out their offices? What does this tell us about the qualities that are required in a servant of God?

- 2. What did Jeroboam hope to accomplish by sending his wife to Ahijah in disguise and with a poor person’s gift?

- 3. What were the two types of sins that were specifically mentioned during the reign of Rehoboam in Judah (14:21-31)?

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 14:1-4; Joshua 18:1-10.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 14:5-16; Deuteronomy 9:7-8, 16-19.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Kings 14:17-20; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13.

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 14:21-24; John 4:34; Joshua 1:7-9.

a. Where and from whom did Rehoboam pick up these sins?

b. What do the sins tell us about Rehoboam's character?

c. What do the sins tell us about the state of the kingdom of Judah?

4. What impact did the invasion of Judah by the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak have on Rehoboam?

5. What was the one standard by which kings were judged in Scripture? In what way can we apply this to our life? Give an example.
