

The Story – Chapter 14: A Kingdom Divided

Introduction

This week, we look how after Solomon's death, things go downhill pretty quickly for God's chosen people. Although Israel experienced unprecedented achievement and prosperity during most of Solomon's reign, at the end, his oppression of his people through taxes and conscripted work, and his worship of foreign gods, led to a divided kingdom after his death.

If you don't have *The Story* book, you can read 1 Kings 12-19, 2 Kings 2, 4, and 6; Hosea 4-5, 8-9 and 14; and Amos 1, 3-5 and 9.

Summary of Chapters 14 – A Kingdom Divided

Solomon's worship of foreign gods near the end of his life and his oppression of his people had catastrophic consequences for God's chosen people. Upon his death, his son Rehoboam refused to provide any relief from Solomon's heavy taxation, resulting in a divided nation. Only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam. The other 10 tribes to the north seceded, took the name of Israel and made Jeroboam their king. However, Jeroboam, like Aaron centuries before, set up idols of counterfeit worship, leading Israel into idolatry. Prophets predicted the end of Jeroboam's reign, which occurred soon thereafter.

In Judah, Rehoboam allowed God's people to fall into the same idolatry as in the North. The years of peace under Solomon ended when Shishak, king of Egypt attacked Judah and carried off the gold and silver treasures. Rehoboam replaced them with bronze, but the decline in moral and spiritual values was even sharper than the drop in value from gold to bronze.

The series of idolatrous kings continue, as both Judah and Israel were led further and further away from God. Abijah son of Rehoboam became the next king of Judah. His tenure was short and sinful like his father's. No good kings reigned in Israel after the split of the kingdom. And just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, Israel sank deeper into idolatry under Ahab and Jezebel.

Discussion Questions

As you read, remember there are discussion questions for each chapter beginning on page 473 of the book and also questions that can be found on *The Story* bookmark. Also, feel free to consider some of the questions below:

1. Solomon's son Rehoboam sought counsel from the elders who had served his father first and then to the young men who had served him. He received very different advice and ultimately chose to follow the advice of his contemporaries. To whom do you turn when you need advice in making difficult decisions? Why? Who else would you like to include in this circle?
Whose advice are you most likely to follow? Why?

2. Chapters 14 is full of stories of conflict. Do you tend to avoid conflict, provoke it or address it head on? What lessons about conflict and conflict resolution can you learn from the stories in this chapter?
3. Even in the midst of these stories of conflict and idolatrous kings, God's upper story still reveals how God relentlessly pursues his people. How do you see God pursuing you when conflict and chaos seem to be a part of your life?
4. What questions came up for you while you were reading these chapters?