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*Saint Mark's Church
Sunday School*

**The division of the Kingdom after Solomon
(1 Kings 12-16)
10/OT/2**

1. General Aims of the unit

Better Understanding of the history of the People of God in the promised land (the 12 historical books) and how God was dealing with them when they inherited the promised land

2. Special aims of the lesson

1. To review briefly the history of the Jews since the beginning of being a kingdom .
2. To highlight the reasons behind the division of the kingdom and the role of Rehoboam in this division.
3. To detail the story of Jeroboam, the prophesy of Prophet Ahijai , the advice of the prophet (ch.11). The major sin of Jeroboam.
4. To briefly mention the story of the man of God who cried against the altar of Bethel and the reward of disobedience.
5. To briefly mention the harsh message of Lord God to Jeroboam through Ahijai the prophet (Ch.14)

3.Outcomes

By the end of this lesson the teens are able to:

1. Distinguish the major sin Jeroboam did in Israel and the reason behind it .
2. Debate the harsh judgments of God against Solomon and Jeroboam when they worshipped the idols and caused the children of Israel to stumble and follow idols.
3. Discuss this verse and apply it to the events of this lesson “..... *Has 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 heed than the fat of rams.*”(1Sam. 15:22)
4. List the main characteristics of Rehoboam and discuss why he didn't learn anything from the wisdom of his father Solomon ?

4. Verses : 1 Sam. 15:22 ; Rom. 1:25 , 28

5. References: . Any commentary on the book of 1st. Kings

LESSON & ACTIVITY

Watch You Tube video of King Solomon Part 16 of 17 (approx 11 min)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2afsfDx2CwE&feature=related>

and King Solomon Part 17 of 17 (approx 3 min)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IHPxakM2WU&feature=related>

Given that the students have recently completed Bible Studies in these chapters, it may be possible to lead the lesson by way of debate, and active participation by the students.

NOTES TO THE SERVANT

Background to the Schism

A large part of Solomon's reign was during a 'Golden Age' of peace and prosperity for the Israelites. During this time Solomon was able to build many projects. This labour became a "heavy yoke" for the people. Whilst not specifically mentioned in the Bible, there was probably also a burden on the people with higher taxes being imposed on them. This was a significant concern for the people of Israel at the time of Solomon's death.

Perhaps however the main reason or background to the division of the Kingdom of Israel (which lasts to this day) is sin. Solomon sinned by falling into idolatry and worshipping the false gods of his many foreign wives; for this reason the prophet Ahijah says to Jeroboam:

Solomon "has not walked in My ways, to do what is right before Me, as did his father David". (1Kings 11:30)

Sin - the turning away from God, and worshipping false Gods, destroys unity.

David also had sinned, and despite his true repentance, God told him through the prophet Nathan:

"Now, therefore the sword will never depart from your house forever, because you scorned Me." (2Samuel 12:10).

Because of Solomon's sins, whilst he was alive, the prophet Ahijah prophesied to Jeroboam that he will lead the 10 tribes of Israel (excluding Judah, and Benjamin – later to be called the Southern Kingdom), later referred to as the Northern Kingdom. However, this was subject to a condition that he would obey God (see below). The division did not occur until after Solomon's death in about 931 BC.

Subsequent to the Schism

The kingdom of Israel (northern kingdom) lasted for 200 years after the division. They were eventually all led into captivity by the Assyrians in about 722 BC. They had 17 kings, and none of them were godly men, in spite of the pleadings of many prophets.

The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted longer for a further 200 years until about 586 BC when they were led into captivity by the Babylonians. They had however been invaded a number of times by other countries, who stole a lot of Judah's wealth. They had 19 kings, some good and some bad. The temple was destroyed, homes ruined, and all the people were led into exile.

Jeroboam

It is important to understand that Jeroboam whom God chose to be King of the Northern Tribes did not have royal blood, and was not a descendant of David.

He was a labourer, who found favour in the eyes of King Solomon, because he was strong and a hard worker.

By choosing Jeroboam, God was sending a message to the House of David, that it should not take God's mercy for granted. The kingdom could be stripped away from it, if it continued to disobey Him.

This is also a message for us. We should not take it for granted that we are God's anointed children. Notwithstanding that we are sons and daughter of a King and the Creator of the world, we cannot take God's mercy for granted. If we continue to disobey God, and be unrepentant, there will undoubtedly be a consequence and punishment for our sins.

Conversely, there is also another message in that sometimes we may feel out of our depth, or believe that something is out of our reach. But just as God chose Jeroboam (who would never have expected to be chosen a king), we also have hope when we follow and rely on God.

Jeroboam however had a condition to his success:

“ .. you shall reign over everything your heart desires. You shall be king over Israel. It shall be, if you hear and do everything I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right before Me, to keep My statutes and My commandments... then I shall be with you and build you a house that shall endure, as I did for David” (1Kings11:35)

Jeroboam wasted his opportunity. He became concerned that when the people of Israel traveled to Jerusalem (in the Southern Kingdom) as part of their ritual and pilgrims, that they would abandon him and follow Rehoboam instead.

So he build a new centre for worship (rather than Jerusalem), he made the capital of the North in Samaria (Bethel and Dan), and there he build the alters for worship. He changed the religious symbols and built two calves of gold, and degraded the priesthood by allowing others who were not Levites to become priests.

As a consequence his son died, and the kingdom was overthrown by repeated invasions by the Assyrians.

Rehoboam

Rehoboam, unfortunately lacked the wisdom that his father Solomon had. He was young, arrogant and filled with pride.

The first request the people of Israel approached him with as king, was to lighten the burden which was imposed on them by King Solomon. This was Rehoboam's opportunity to win the hearts and loyalty of the people.

He did supposedly two things right. He took time to consider this important decision, and he sought the advice of the elders.

Unfortunately he also sought the advice of the younger generation he grew up with. Arguably, he already knew what he wanted and had made up his mind. He was however looking for advice from someone to back him up.

This is a problem which we are all guilty of. If we do not like the advice of one parent, we go to the other, or seek the advice of our friends. We might change churches or change priests to try and get advice which will make our conscience feel better. The correct advice is not advice that we want to hear, but advice which is true by someone who cares for us, and preferably older with more experience.

It did not take long after this decision to follow the advice of the young ones, and continue to the harsh treatment of the people, that the Schism took effect. Rehoboam refused to lighten the burden for the Israelites, possibly because he believed that to do so would make him look weak. The reality is that by his actions, he weakened the nation of Israel, and as a consequence his Kingdom of Judah was repeatedly persecuted, and eventually destroyed in 586 BC.

Glory be to God Forever, Amen.