

## The Division of Israel: How Three Fools Ruined a Nation

The Story of Israel, Episode 7 of 10

1 Kings 11-12

*The story of Israel is (true) history, it is sacred history, and it is our family history. We are telling this story in ten episodes: Promise, Salvation, Law, Land, Covenant, Temple, **Division**, Prophets, Exile, and Restoration. Today is episode #7, as the high point in Israel's history ends with disaster, as the nation divides in two.*

Israel hit its high point in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC. It didn't last long, due to three foolish kings:

**(1) Solomon:** the wise young king who became a faithless old king (1 Kings 11:1-13)

- Riches, wives, and slaves
- *Do I still need God if I now have everything?* –the rich fool

**(2) Rehoboam:** the young ruler who couldn't resist bad advice (1 Kings 12:1-16)

- Bravado and cruelty: "My father Solomon disciplined you with whips, but I'll do the same with scorpions." (12:14)
- *Now I can finally do whatever I want.* –the young fool

**(3) Jeroboam:** the clever politician who invented a religion (1 Kings 12:25-33)

- Afraid of his people travelling to Jerusalem to worship... and their hearts turning. So he makes golden idols in his own country for his people to worship.
- *Religion must serve me.* –the idolatrous fool

The results of this disastrous division:

- The northern kingdom ("Israel"): 19 kings, all bad
- The southern kingdom ("Judah"): 20 kings, only 8 were good

Is unity possible? The gospel says *Yes—in a new and different king.* Isaiah 11.

### Questions for Reflection and Application

1. In your experience, do leaders make a big difference? (whether good or bad)
2. Solomon experienced the multiplication of riches, wives, and *gods*. (1 Kings 11:1-13) Is there a lesson here for you—or is this only the tragic story of a person very different from you and me, namely, a rich monarch?
3. Jeroboam constructed a religion that served his own desires and goals. Again, is there a lesson here for you and me—or is this only the story of a king with enough power to invent a counterfeit religion?
4. Isaiah 11 speaks the gospel in terms of a king who is eminently capable and faithful. He will unify Israel once again (11:12-13), as well adding Gentiles (11:10, 12; cf. 19:19-24).
  - a. How does Jesus as our ultimate political ruler shape our understanding of our nation's political rulers?
  - b. Pray about your political ideas and convictions. Do they reflect the gospel truth that Jesus is King?