



## BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

**A2308 ~ The Kingdoms Divided.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

Towards the end of King Solomon's reign in Israel, one of Solomon's officials, called Jeroboam, became a problem for Solomon. Initially, Jeroboam was both a mighty man of valour and a good worker, so Solomon put Jeroboam in charge of the labourers from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were all descendants from Jacob's son, Joseph.

One day, God sent the prophet, Ahijah, to meet Jeroboam in a field outside the walls of Jerusalem when no one else was around. The prophet was wearing a new cloak when he met Jeroboam. This he tore into 12 pieces, before giving 10 of the pieces to Jeroboam. Ahijah then explained to Jeroboam that it was the Lord's decision to divide Israel into two and give Jeroboam 10 of the 12 tribes to rule over, for Solomon and his people had forsaken the Lord by worshipping other pagan gods instead of Him. From this account, we can see that many of the Israelites had followed Solomon's example and they too, were now worshipping the pagan gods that Solomon's foreign wives had introduced.

Ahijah told Jeroboam that in accordance with the Lord's word to Solomon, the 10 tribes wouldn't be taken from Solomon during his lifetime but instead, from his son, Rehoboam. Rehoboam would be left with only the two tribes of Judah and Simeon to rule, although most of the small number of people in Simeon had either integrated with Judah by that point, or moved north to join the 10 northern tribes of Israel, which just left the tribe of Judah in the southern region.

Jeroboam was told that he would be king over Israel, which would now be the 10 northern tribes. But Ahijah also made it clear that the same covenant conditions that had applied to Solomon would now apply to Jeroboam. In this, God promised Jeroboam that if he walked in God's ways and did what was right in God's sight, then God would make Jeroboam's kingship into a ruling dynasty, just as He had done for Solomon's father, King David.

When Solomon somehow found out about Jeroboam's plan to rule over the northern tribes, he decided to kill him. When Jeroboam heard this, he fled to Egypt, where he stayed until Solomon died.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, has been declared the next king of Israel and Rehoboam addresses the people of the northern tribes at the historic city of Shechem, where his grandfather David had been anointed as king.

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By the end of his life, King Solomon must have been so distant from his subjects and their problems that he failed to see that he was causing them harm and unrest. The rebellion of some of the people he usually received tribute money from, should have alerted him that he was getting off-course as a king and leader. God gives authority to kings and leaders so that they may serve others, not themselves.

Where can good advice be found? Rehoboam should have gone to God to ask Him what he should do. But instead, he went to his father's counsellors and they told him how to respond. When this wasn't the advice he wanted to hear, Rehoboam sought advice from his peers and those whom he'd grown up with. No doubt Rehoboam's peers would have belonged to court official families and who were not representatives from the lower classes of people in Israel. Why did Rehoboam listen to his peers' advice and no one else's? The Lord had hardened Rehoboam's heart so that God's prophesy through Ahijah and His purpose for appointing Jeroboam as king, in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, Chapter 11, would be fulfilled.

Rehoboam's arrogant response to the proposal was that the smallest measures he would adopt in ruling the common people would be harsher than what his father's largest measures had been over them. For example, Solomon had used ordinary whips to punish them; but now, Rehoboam would use metal-tipped whips. The angry northern tribes rejected Rehoboam as their king and they refused to anoint him as their king over them. Instead, the 10 northern tribes announced that they would no longer remain in the kingdom of David but rather, establish their own kingdom in the north. They would be known as 'Israel', while Judah in the south would remain separate to them and ruled by Rehoboam.

Rehoboam wasn't very impressed by this resistance and commanded his man in charge of forced labour to conscript the rebellious Israelites into his work force anyway. But the people rose up and they stoned Rehoboam's man to death. They might as well have done the same to Rehoboam if he hadn't quickly escaped back to Jerusalem in his chariot.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, Chapter 11, Rehoboam arrived back in Jerusalem to call together his trained army of 180,000 men to go into war against the northern kingdom of Israel. However, God sent a prophet to tell Rehoboam that he was not to go to war against his fellow Israelites, and so the prophet sent the soldiers home in obedience to God's words.

Meanwhile, in the new northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam was now king and he fortified the city of Shechem as his headquarters. Yet he felt insecure; he worried that the Israelites would turn back to Rehoboam when they visited Jerusalem for their annual festivals. Jeroboam evidently didn't believe the prophet Ahijah's promise to him that if he walked in God's ways, Jeroboam and his descendants would have an enduring dynasty in Israel.

Jeroboam should have known that it is God who raises up kings and takes other kings down. Because God was displeased with the first king of Israel, Saul, God removed his dynasty. Jeroboam wasn't from a royal family, yet for him to continue on as king of the northern tribes, it depended on him remaining true to God. However, instead of trusting God's word, Jeroboam asked for advice about this risk of losing people when they travelled back to Jerusalem to worship God. Jeroboam knew that if the northern tribes again joined with Judah in the south, he would be killed as a rebel.

Jeroboam decided to set up two centres of worship in his kingdom, one in the extreme north at Dan and one in Bethel in the south, being only 10 miles from Jerusalem. Jeroboam made two calves of gold for these worship centres in complete defiance of God's command not to worship God by means of carved or engraved likenesses of anything that is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. In Exodus, Chapter 20, God said that the people were not to bow down to any such thing, as God was not represented in such images; nor could he be contained in that way. As this system of worship was considered by northern Israel as less evil than the worship of Baal, Jeroboam seemed to have provided a new way for the people to worship the invisible, everlasting God of heaven. But in doing this, Jeroboam had turned against the Lord and caused God's people to sin.

Jeroboam went on further to do many other things against God's laws. He built shrines for pagan worship in high places and set up a rival feast to compete with God's appointed Tabernacles feast in Jerusalem. In his anxiousness not to lose the throne, Jeroboam had cast off the one means that he had for keeping it - obedience to God and His word. In so doing, Jeroboam actively led the people away from God. Sadly, the idolatry of Jeroboam was one reason why the northern tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria 200 years later.

Where can Christians get good advice? Sometimes there are mature Christians in church who will tell any enquirer what the Scriptures say. In the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 17, the Apostle Paul and Silas escaped from angry Thessalonian Jews by night and came to a city called Berea. There the Jewish people accepted what Paul was saying and spent time in the Old Testament Scriptures checking out to see if what Paul was saying was true.

The sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Himself, taught God's truth to anyone who would listen to Him and accept His words. God's people need to keep reading the Word of God and living by its principles, as the Bible alone has the words of eternal life. People who love wealth talk about finding the riches of Solomon but Jesus' kingdom isn't based on gold. It's based on Jesus' love and forgiveness, freely available to all who will trust in His death as payment for their sins and His resurrection as inherited life with God for all who Jesus Christ pardons. Will you forsake all your selfish ambitions and plans and make Jesus king of your life? You can't be like Jeroboam, who picked and chose what he would and wouldn't do for God. As a result, he became a big spiritual hindrance to the people that he ruled.

The Lord Jesus taught us in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6, Verse 10, to pray that God's Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. As a result, we should always seek the Lord about what He wants us to do in every situation.

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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