

# Basic Training: The Soldier's Manual

## Lesson Six: The Divided Kingdom

### Introduction:

#### A. The Biblical Narrative:

1. When we left off, the nation of Israel was at its peak. It was enjoying unprecedented peace & prosperity. Solomon, the wisest man to have lived, was king. Things weren't perfect, but they were very good. Yet during his latter days, Solomon turned from obeying God. As a result, God would tear the kingdom away from Solomon's son (**1 Kings 11:11-13**). Solomon had put Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, in charge of servants. One day the prophet Ahijah met him and told Jeroboam that he would be given the 10 northern tribes. He was told this happened due to Israel's disobedience & idolatry. God promised Jeroboam if he'd follow God faithfully, God would establish his throne like God had for David.
2. After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. The people, along with Jeroboam, asked what kind of king he would be... would he be tough or gentle? Rehoboam sought counsel from older men and his younger peers. The older men advised him to be a servant king, the younger advised him to rule with a heavy thumb. Rehoboam listened to his peers instead of the wisdom of age (**1 Kings 12:13-14**). This didn't go over well at all... the people revolted. 10 tribes defected & named Jeroboam their king. This left Rehoboam the tribe of Judah only... eventually Benjamin joined him too (**vs. 17, 19-20**)
3. Rehoboam and Jeroboam ruled over two divided but still very connected nations. Rehoboam ruled for 17 years and Jeroboam ruled for 22 years. They set out on very different courses...
  - a. Jeroboam (Israel) – His first act was to set up altars for worship in Dan & Bethel. He feared the people would turn to Judah if they were always traveling there to worship. These weren't just alternate worship sites... they were against God's will and flung Israel deep into idolatry. He also changed the priesthood & feast days. God condemned Jeroboam and his lineage was cut off (**1 Kings 14:11-12**)
  - b. Rehoboam (Judah) – At first he gathered 180K troops to conquer Israel, but God let him know this division was God's doing and to refrain from battle. He had 18 wives and 60 concubines and fathered 28 sons & 60 daughters. He introduced idolatry through building "high places" in Judah. God used Egypt to punish Rehoboam for his unfaithfulness. Just before he was to be destroyed, he humbled himself before God and so God spared him. God still punished him by forcing his reign to be subservient to Egypt (**2 Chron 12:6-8**)
4. Around 18 kings followed Jeroboam reigning over Israel. None of them were good.
  - a. Kings listed with years of reign: Nadab (2), Baasha (24), Elah (2), Zimri (7 Days), Tibni (5), Omri (12), Ahab (22), Ahaziah (2), Joram (12), Jehu (28), Jehoahaz (17), Jehoash (16), Jeroboam II (41), Zechariah (6 months), Shallum (1 month), Menahem (10), Pekah (20), Pekahiah (2), Hoshea (9) – \*\*\**Years unless otherwise noted*
  - b. The most famous king of Israel was Ahab. He and his wife Jezebel was the most wicked tandem Israel knew. They brought Baal and Ashteroth worship into

- Israel (**1 Kings 16:30-31**). When confronted by God's prophet Elijah, Ahab calls him the troubler of Israel (**1 Kings 18:17-18**). After a showdown exposing the fraud of Baal worship, Jezebel tried to kill Elijah, sending him running for his life.
- c. One of Ahab's sons, Jehoram would later become king. While he did evil, he is given some credit for removing the Baal worship that plagued Israel (**2 Kings 3:2-3**). Israel never moved past their idolatry, but God still was there working with them and keeping promises God made of peace and prosperity.
  - d. In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, Sargon, King of Assyria, captured Samaria and took the Israelites into captivity. Sargon brought peoples from other parts of His empire and settled them in Samaria. These people intermarried with the Israelites who were left and combined their paganism with a corrupted form of the worship of the Lord. The result was the Samaritans we read of in the NT.
5. There were 18 kings and 1 queen who followed Rehoboam reigning over Judah. Unlike Israel to the north, a few of these were good. Some were kind of good. Some were very bad.
- a. Kings listed with years of reign: Abijah (3), Asa (41), Jehoshaphat (25), Jehoram (8), Ahaziah (1), Athaliah (7), Joash (40), Amaziah (29), Azariah (52), Jotham (16), Ahaz (16), Hezekiah (29), Manasseh (55), Amon (2), Josiah (31), Jehoahaz (3 Months), Jehoiakim (11), Jehoiachin (3 months), Zedekiah (11) – All of David!
  - b. Rehoboam's grandson, King Asa, "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David" (**1 Kings 15:11**). During his rule "the high places were not removed, yet his heart was loyal to the LORD all his days" (**1 Kings 15:14**). Zerah the Ethiopian invaded Judah with a million man army, but because Asa called on the Lord, he defeated the Ethiopians with an army of 300,000. Asa restored the worship of the Lord. But in his later years, Asa used the treasuries of the Lord's house to make a treaty with Ben-Hadad of Syria against Baasha of Israel. When the seer Hanani rebuked him, Asa persecuted him and some of the people.
  - c. Asa's son Jehoshaphat was one of the best kings (**2 Chronicles 17:3-6**). He taught all the people of Judah the law of God. He installed righteous judges. Sadly, he chose to align himself with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, by getting Athaliah, Ahab's daughter, to marry his son Jehoram. This eventually led to the extinction of his family. His son and grandson would follow after the ways of Ahab instead of David. Athaliah, to gain power, would kill off all of his grandsons save one... Joash. Joash was hidden until he was seven, preserving the lineage of David.
  - d. When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada brought Joash from hiding and had him proclaimed king and Athaliah killed. Baal worship was destroyed, the worship of the Lord was restored, and the Temple was repaired. But after Jehoiada died, Joash listened to the princes of Judah, who persuaded him to turn to idolatry. Joash even killed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, for protesting against this. Thus a small Syrian army defeated a large army of Joash. When he was sick, his own servants murdered Joash. Joash did well until his anchor died (**2 Kings 12:1-3**).
  - e. Amaziah, son of Joash, followed the Lord but not with his whole heart. He defeated the Edomites. Thus, in his pride he challenged Jehoash of Israel to war, but Jehoash thoroughly defeated him. Finally, his own servants killed him. Uzziah (Azariah) his son was a good king who obeyed the Lord. Thus, Judah became

strong and defeated their enemies. But Uzziah became proud and went into the Temple to offer incense, a work only the priests could perform. The Lord struck him with leprosy, and he was isolated the remainder of his life. Ahaz, the grandson of Uzziah, was terribly wicked. He sacrificed his own son to Baal. He was totally defeated by both the Syrians and Israel. Israel carried 200,000 of their kinsmen from Judah captive but returned them at the rebuke of the prophet Oded. Ahaz sought aid from mighty Assyria against Syria and Israel. This brought about the downfall of first Syria then Israel, but also led Tiglath-pileser of Assyria to invade Judah. Ahaz perverted the Temple into a place of idolatry.

6. It is during the days of the divided kingdom when we are introduced to most of the prophets. These men served as the mouth piece of God, revealing His will and mind to men. They appeared before kings, implored the people, and even were present for wars. Real heroes!
  - a. Elijah (Israel) – The most prolific prophet to Israel. Elijah is best known for his dealing with Ahab. A battle on Mt Carmel where he exposed Baal and its prophets as frauds. After this, when Jezebel sought to kill him, Elijah runs fearful of his life and depressed. God feeds him and revives his spirit. He meets a widow who had a son and was about to starve to death... Elijah does a miracle and provides for her and she provides food for him. Elijah didn't die, but was carried into Heaven by God in a chariot of fire. He named Elisha to take his place **(Passage)**
  - b. Hosea (Israel) – Perhaps the most strange situation. He was told by God to go out and take a wife of harlotry. As each kid is named, it becomes clear his children are not his. His life and his pain was to be an unforgettable picture to Israel of their relationship with God. They had been unfaithful to God! **(Passage)**
  - c. Jonah (Israel) – Perhaps he's the most well-known. Told by God to go and preach to Ninevah, Israel's greatest enemy, he runs from God. He boards a boat heading for Tarshish, the opposite side of the known world. A storm arose and he let them know God was after him. They toss him overboard where he spends three days and nights in the belly of a great fish. Here, he repents. The fish vomits him out and he preaches for 40 days to Ninevah. They actually repent. Jonah actually gets angry. He knows this means mercy for Ninevah **(Passage)**
  - d. Isaiah (Judah) – He prophesied during a turbulent time when Assyria was a constant threat. He was a strong influence on Hezekiah, one of the good kings, to bring about religious reform and political freedom. He was stricken by the moral decline of Judah. He spoke about the coming judgment & condemnation of God, but also about the coming hope found in God's servant **(Passage)**
  - e. Joel (Judah) – Joel spoke with apocalyptic nature... using signs & symbols. He spoke of locusts, the sun and moon, etc. in a figurative way. He declared the coming day of the Lord. He also declared judgment and coming salvation **(Passage)**
7. Assyrian army decimated the northern kingdom, the nation of Israel, and they would never recover again. Judah was a little more faithful to God and had a few good kings and so they existed for an extra 136 years before facing their own captivity in Babylon. This time is the next period... Judah alone.

## **B. Lessons From The Biblical Narrative:**

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1. Sin has a much bigger impact than we imagine in the moment. It was just an altar in Dan and Bethel. It was just a high place. It was just a wife. It was just an alliance. Decisions made by men set an entire nation on a course of depravation and destruction. Some were wicked and didn't care. Others weren't. But did they see how far things would go? Did they see the harm that would come? When we think our choices only affect us we are completely wrong. When we think any sin is not a big deal, we are completely wrong. Sin is pervasive. Sin will corrupt and destroy everything! **(Romans 3:9-12)**
2. People are not perfect. Sometimes good people have chinks in their armor, this doesn't mean they aren't good. Sometimes bad people do some good things. We have to learn to give people room for growth, show appreciation for the good we see, and be patient as they struggle. Think about the kings. Ever try to figure out which were good and which were bad? It doesn't break down so easy. Sometimes people who were faithful did not take their reforms all the way. See people how God does **(I Kings 15:11-14)**
3. We also learn that a person's future is not bound by their past. In the kings we find good kings rising from lousy parents and lousy kings coming from good parents. We cannot take our background for granted, assuming we are fine just because we have a strong spiritual heritage. But we also cannot dismiss our usefulness or accept failures due to issues with our past. Our past affect us, but it doesn't determine our future **(Josh 24:15)**
4. When we are seeking to change our lives, it is crucial that we pursue a complete restoration. So many of the commended kings have an asterisk in their narrative because they did not completely remove the high places. So many had opportunity to make lasting change, but fell short. Are we any different? Sometimes we see where we need to make changes, and we do, but we may be tempted to stop short. Maybe we secretly want to hold on to something, maybe it is too difficult, or it is too costly **(Eph 4:22-24)**
5. God is ready and willing to forgive and show mercy. These kings are a powerful testimony to God's desire for all men to come to repentance. Sometimes we think, "God could never forgive me" or "I have just done too much" – We are wrong! **(2 Kings 13:1-5)**

### **C. The Scarlet Thread Running Through The Biblical Narrative:**

1. There is a scarlet thread woven throughout the tapestry of the Bible. From the Garden of Eden to the Cross of Calvary, to the promise of Paradise in Revelation, it is **HISTORY**.
2. First, there is the preservation of the lineage of David. So many times, this family tree stood at the brink of total annihilation. Yet it was preserved, like with Joash. God's providence was at work keeping ancestors alive for the purpose of bringing one into this world to sit on the throne of David as King and save mankind from their sins **(Matthew 1:1ff)**
3. We see Jesus in the story of Jonah. Of course it would have been hard to see it when Jonah first experienced it, but Jesus drew the connection. The Messiah, the Son of God, would spend three days in the depths of earth like Jonah did in the fish **(Matthew 12:40-41)**
4. Finally, consider the prophecies of Isaiah. In the middle of all of the condemnation from God there were words of hope in God's anointed one **(Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 42:1-3; 53:1ff)**