

The Schism

“And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee” 1 Kings 11:31.

A schism is a breakup between members of an alliance of people caused by a strong disagreement on some important matter. It was God who allowed Israel to split into two kingdoms but it was Satan who fomented a secular disagreement into the split. The disagreement dealt with how the nation was to be ruled, but because neither side of the disagreement sought God’s guidance, Satan was able to make this dispute irreconcilable. Civil discord might be blamed for the split, but revisions to worship practice became the strategy for sustaining it (a strategy still used today).

Seeds of discord were planted during the reign of King Solomon when Israel enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and military might; all twelve tribes joyfully served God and worked together to build Solomon’s temple. However, heavy taxation and hard labor levied by Solomon produced civil unrest, mostly among the ten northern tribes who felt that life should become easier now that their nation was rich and had great stature in the world. After the death of Solomon and the rise of his son, Rehoboam, the northern tribes recruited Jeroboam from Egypt to ask the new king for leniency. Rather than grant their request, Rehoboam threatened to make life worse if they did not stop their protest. This greatly angered the northern tribes: *“So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents”* (1 Kings 12:16). Thus, without compromise from the king and without consulting God, the ten northern tribes seceded from the nation, making Jeroboam their king and leaving Rehoboam to govern the two southern tribes.

Jeroboam was asked to represent the northern tribes to the king because he was well-known in Israel for having honorably served Solomon for many years. However, toward his later years Solomon lost favor with God because his many wives had *“...turned away his heart after other gods...”* (1 Kings 11:4) and for this *“...the Lord was angry with Solomon...”* (1 Kings 11:9). It was around this same time that Jeroboam lost favor with Solomon and had to flee to Egypt for his life. Perhaps the prime motivator for Jeroboam’s return was

what prophet Ahijah told him, *“I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand (Rehoboam), and give it unto thee (Jeroboam), even ten tribes”* (1 Kings 11:35). Further, God promised to always be with Jeroboam *“...if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee...”* (1 Kings 11:38). Thus, with God behind him Jeroboam took the challenge. Clearly, God intended to bless the split, but only if Jeroboam remained faithful. God made a similar promise to Solomon, but, again, only *“if thou wilt walk in my ways...”* (1 Kings 3:14)—sadly, neither would remain faithful to the end. (God makes this same promise to each believer today.)

It did not take Jeroboam long to realize that his life and that the existence of his kingdom were in jeopardy: *“If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall...they shall kill me...”* (1 Kings 12:27). Rather than seek God, Jeroboam quickly devised ways to ensure that the people stayed loyal to him: First, he cast dispersion on their former worship saying, *“...it is too much for you...”* (1 Kings 12:28). Then, he modernized worship to be more lenient, by making it more convenient and by allowing sacrifices to be offered anywhere. Next, he forbade Levites from preaching in his worship services. Finally, he used priests of his own choosing to effectively deny people access to God’s Word: *“And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi”* (1 Kings 12:31). Their gods were now made of gold which were gladly accepted by the undiscerning people. All this went against God’s warning to stay faithful to His word and, as a result, their day of judgment was on the distant horizon.

Today, as we approach the second coming of Jesus, the same rejection of God is taking shape; there is a great rush to modernize worship, most notably discarding scriptural confession. Not that people today refuse to worship God, *“...but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”* (2 Timothy 4:3), it is that more and more prefer to do it on their own terms. The Northern Kingdom refused to offer sacrifices at Jerusalem: at the door of the tabernacle where confession was made and a priest sprinkled blood for the forgiveness of sins. They chose to confess sin elsewhere, but God rejected this: *“And bringeth it (a sacrifice) not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, ... blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people”* (Leviticus 17:4).

The Word of God has not changed: it is He who still awakens one to sin, calls sinners to repentance, gives

sinners the strength and faith to confess sin to the royal priesthood (believers), and gives living faith to believe the proclamation of forgiveness in His name and shed blood. Dear reader, diligently study scripture to be able to discern false doctrine; seek the Lord while He may yet be found—on His terms, not on your own.

God's Peace,
Charles Korhonen

Jan 5	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Jan 9	Charles Korhonen	
Jan 16	Ken Storm	
Jan 23	Nathan Ruonavaara	Potluck meal

Church Cleaning: Curtis and Karen Lampinen
Sunday School/Adult Bible Study: 10am, Worship at 11am
Wednesday: Bible Study 7pm

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