

# 1 Kings 13-14

## Chapter 12:23-33

### The Golden Calves at Bethel Dan

Jeroboam now does what David and Solomon did to consolidate their nation over a period of 80 years. He starts by fortifying Shechem which will become his residence and eventually the capital of the Northern Kingdom. In this area the capital city of Samaria will be built, known as Sychar in John 4 where Jesus encountered the woman at the well. The NT Samaritans take their name from the city of Samaria, the Northern capital. These cities are in a large valley in the Hill Country of Ephraim (Remember, Ephraim is the leading tribe in the north and rival to Judah in the south.

Notice that Jeroboam is trying to do what David did when he conquered Jerusalem and made it his residence and political capital. He understood the importance of having this principle city around which national unity could be built. He also begins to do what Solomon did by fortifying key points throughout his kingdom to increase security, define his borders and demonstrate that the king had power to defend and control in all of the tribal territories.

What happens next is the most important. Jeroboam realizes that if his people keep going to the temple in Jerusalem to worship the Lord then they will be pulled back toward the Davidic king that rules from there. Remember, God had made promises about his temple, the city of Jerusalem and the Davidic king that were hard for Jeroboam to deny, and over time people's emotion would subside and they would reevaluate their commitment to a separate kingdom and a different family of kings... namely Jeroboam and his descendants. His solution was to abandon the worship of the LORD altogether and make new gods and place them in new places of worship. Interestingly he chose a golden calf and declared that "This is the god that delivered you from Egypt. He looks back at history and reinterprets it to lend legitimacy to the new god he has made. He places these gods in two new places – one in the South (Bethel) and one in the North (Dan). The Bethel shrine is right on the border with Judah so that it captures people who might be tempted to go to Jerusalem to worship. The other is on the Northern frontier – in Dan, the northern most city before you leave Israel's territory. The foundations of this sanctuary and altar of sacrifice in Dan have been excavated – it was large and well developed. The final thing Jeroboam does is to appoint a new priesthood. They are not the Levitical priests that even lived within his borders but they were priests from wherever with no regard for the law and structure that Moses was given.

Jeroboam was promised by God that if he honored Him that HE would bless him with a dynasty like he promised to David; but he chose man's way instead of God's way, and he led the Northern tribes directly into idolatry and away from the LORD!! Man's way by its very nature leads us away from God. Instead of trusting God's word and promise we trust our own political and strategic skills and as a result we dishonor God, lead others away from God and provoke the wrath of God instead of his blessing!

## The prophets and the Consequences for Jeroboam (Chapters 13-14)

God's response to Jeroboam is swift and severe. The first is from a prophet who lives in Judah who comes to Bethel to prophesy against the altar and against the king. The king tries to seize him but his hand withers and the prophet has to heal him. The Lord told the prophet not to eat or drink anything while in Israel's territory. This was probably so that he would not be "wined and dined" into saying something other than God commanded him to say. He went to deliver the message, refused Jeroboam's hospitality but then was deceived by another prophet who invited him to rest and eat at his home. The Prophet compromised and was killed by a lion in the road. The king still did not repent after all of these signs.

In Chapter 14, the king's son is ill and he sends his wife in disguise to visit the prophet Ahijah who is old and blind to find out if the child will die. The Lord, however, tells the prophet that the king's wife was coming and she is to be called out on her deception and finally that the child will die as soon as she returns home. The Prophet declares the end to Jeroboam's dynasty and the utter destruction of the Northern Kingdom by some nation that will come from across the Euphrates River.

### Rehoboam King of Judah

The summary of the reign of Solomon's son focuses on the fact that he had an Ammonite mother, mentioned at the beginning and the end of the text. This is the consequence of Solomon's intermarriage with foreign wives. They produced a child who did not follow the ways of the Lord and introduced idolatry into the kingdom of Judah. The Lord is angry with Rehoboam and with all of the evil that he brought into the city and the nation and as a result the king of Egypt comes and invades Jerusalem to take away all of the treasures of the temple and of the king's palace. All the wealth that Solomon had amassed was gone in an instant because he and his son did not follow God's way but rather man's way. Rehoboam makes bronze shields to replace the gold ones of Solomon – in other words he tries to replicate the blessing of God with a cheap imitation. He rules for 17 years, fights with Jeroboam the entire time and dies and his son Abijah succeeds him.

How quickly we can lose what God provides if we do not follow him. God doesn't care about the gold in the temple – he cares about the heart of the king and his people. The gold is taken away as a punishment for disobedience. God is not concerned about our church buildings as much as we are. He is concerned about the hearts of his people and their leaders. Are we faithful to him? Are we following his way?