

## I.N.I.

I Kings 12:25-33  
Third Sunday in Lent  
March 7, 2010

In Christ Jesus, whom alone we worship as our Lord and Savior, and to whom alone we look for the Truth, Dear fellow Redeemed,

This morning we begin a new era in the history of the children of Israel. For the past five weeks we have been studying books of the Bible written by King Solomon. When Solomon reigned the kingdom of Israel was at its greatest and highest point with peace and prosperity. Solomon has now died and as we heard in our first Scripture reading, Solomon's son, Rehoboam takes over the throne. He proves to be a very foolish king and because of his foolish decision to increase the taxes on the people, rather than lower them, the wondrous kingdom of his father and grandfather is torn in two.

The kingdom of Israel consists of the 10 northern tribes and is ruled by a man named Jeroboam, while the kingdom of Judah consists of only the 2 southern tribes and is ruled by Rehoboam.

This event was prophesied of by God. The prophet Ahijah had already told Jeroboam, when he was an aid to Solomon that he someday would rule over 10 tribes. But that some day wasn't soon enough for him. Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon and was forced to flee into Egypt. When Solomon died he returned to Israel, and when the northern tribes seceded the Lord's words came true. The northern tribes chose Jeroboam to be their king.

But there was more to this prophecy from God. Ahijah also said: **SO I WILL TAKE YOU, AND YOU SHALL REIGN OVER ALL YOUR HEART DESIRES, AND YOU SHALL BE KING OVER ISRAEL. THEN IT SHALL BE, IF YOU HEED ALL THAT I COMMAND YOU, WALK IN MY WAYS, AND DO *WHAT IS* RIGHT IN MY SIGHT, TO KEEP MY STATUTES AND MY COMMANDMENTS, AS MY SERVANT DAVID DID, THEN I WILL BE WITH YOU AND BUILD FOR YOU AN ENDURING HOUSE, AS I BUILT FOR DAVID, AND WILL GIVE ISRAEL TO YOU.**

Jeroboam could easily see that the first part of the prophecy from God had come true. He was made king over Israel, the 10 northern tribes. Unfortunately in his proud, arrogant and doubting heart he could not take God at His Word in the second half of the prophesy. God had said, **"If you follow Me; worship Me, walk in My ways"** your house will endure. But Jeroboam thought he knew better and so we see that

### **THE SIN OF JEROBOAM IS**

#### **I: NOT TRUSTING IN GOD'S PROMISES.**

#### **II: CHANGING GOD'S WORD TO SUIT HIS OWN DESIRES.**

Throughout history there are moments that have changed the course of human events. Looking back on the past century we see that the attack on Pearl Harbor was one such event. The dropping of the Atom Bomb was another. The Civil Rights Laws of 1964 extended voting rights and outlawed racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and by facilities that served the general public. The Supreme Court decision in 1973 that made abortion legal through all nine months of pregnancy unfortunately was another moment that has had a very heinous, vile effect on the morality and sanctity of life in America and since then over 50 million unborn babies have been aborted. These decisions made by men have affected millions upon millions of people.

The division of the kingdom of Israel was one such moment in Israel's history. But the event that transpired shortly after it was even more monumental in its effect upon the people. Had Jeroboam followed the LORD, walked in His ways and believed in His promises; had he not introduced idol worship into the northern kingdom the history of Israel would have been entirely different. But his decision affected his children, his family and his nation until they were utterly destroyed and carried off into captivity by the Assyrians. Some 250 years after Jeroboam instituted calf worship we are told, **AND THE LORD REJECTED ALL THE DESCENDANTS OF ISRAEL, AFFLICTED THEM, AND DELIVERED THEM INTO THE HAND OF PLUNDERERS, UNTIL HE HAD CAST THEM FROM HIS SIGHT. FOR HE TORE ISRAEL FROM THE HOUSE OF DAVID, AND THEY MADE JEROBOAM THE SON OF NEBAT KING. THEN JEROBOAM DROVE ISRAEL FROM FOLLOWING THE LORD, AND MADE THEM COMMIT A GREAT SIN. FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WALKED IN ALL THE SINS OF JEROBOAM WHICH HE DID; THEY DID NOT DEPART FROM THEM, UNTIL THE LORD REMOVED ISRAEL OUT OF HIS SIGHT, AS HE HAD SAID BY ALL HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS. SO ISRAEL WAS CARRIED AWAY FROM THEIR OWN LAND TO ASSYRIA, AS IT IS TO THIS DAY.**

By Jeroboam's not trusting in the Lord's promises he led the people away from the true worship of the only LORD God, Jehovah and brought about not only his own family's annihilation but also the annihilation of the whole kingdom. How terribly sad and tragic!

Jeroboam had lost faith and trust in the Lord Jehovah. He wanted to save his kingdom by disobeying God's Law. He did not listen to Ahijah's words. He did not believe in God's promises and so he compromised God's Word; changed the Word to meet his own needs; to suit his own desires.

Jeroboam felt that it was too far for the Israelites to travel all the way to Jerusalem to observe the Jewish feasts and holy days. So he told the people they didn't have to. This was both blasphemy and hypocrisy on Jeroboam's part. It was blasphemy because he was directly making laws contrary to what God's Word said. God commanded them to go to Jerusalem for these festivals and holy day ceremonies. Jeroboam was saying, "What I say goes. Don't listen to what God has said. I know better."

It was hypocrisy, because the real reason behind this was Jeroboam's concern that by going back to Jerusalem several times a year the people would go back to Rehoboam and turn away from his rule and they would reunite with Judah. Jeroboam had the audacity to tell the people that God had laid on them too great a burden for them to keep and then he cloaked his own sinful, selfish scheme in the guise of real concern for the spiritual welfare of the people by telling them, "I am only doing this for your spiritual good."

Jeroboam may not have intended at first to promote public idolatry, but that was exactly what he was doing.

First he placed his own decree—a man-made decree—above God's decree. That is idolatry: fearing, respecting, loving oneself more than God. The Lord had clearly stated in His Word that all adult males were to appear before Him at the temple in Jerusalem at least 3 times a year. 1) The Passover 2) The Festival of Weeks—Pentecost 3) The Feast of Tabernacles

Secondly Jeroboam was committing idolatry because he was going against God's clear command in Exodus 20:4-5: **YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF A CARVED IMAGE, OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH;**

**YOU SHALL NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM NOR SERVE THEM. FOR I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM A JEALOUS GOD, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS ON THE CHILDREN TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATIONS OF THOSE WHO HATE ME,**

Even though Jeroboam said, **HERE ARE YOUR GODS, O ISRAEL, WHICH BROUGHT YOU UP FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT!"** It wasn't true! God is not a golden calf!

To Jeroboam it was probably a little thing. He meant to represent the LORD Jehovah under these forms, but even as God condemned it when the Israelites built the golden calf in the wilderness, He condemns it in our text and He condemns it today.

In our day of ecumenism, it is popular to fashion God under many forms. Most people believe it is proper to worship God under whatever form he believes God to be, and that no one has the right to declare that God exists only as the Triune God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore they say that the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Shinto, the Hindu and yes even the Christian all worship the same god but under different forms. This kind of thinking and belief is the same as Jeroboam.

God has clearly revealed Himself to us in His Word. He is the Father—the Creator of all people. He is the Son—the Redeemer of all people. He is the Holy Spirit—the Sanctifier of all people. Apart from this God there is none other. That is exclusivity and inclusivity in one. God is exclusive, there is only one and that God has saved all people, that is inclusive.

But along with setting up these godless idols, Jeroboam also changed God's Word. He chose priests from all the different classes of people. He changed the dates of their worship festivals. He built high places for sacrifices wherever he pleased and he himself took part in offering the sacrifices **"which he had devised in his own heart."**

All of these things were contrary to God's Word, but Jeroboam reasoned "I know better! What God says is too great a burden! It is too hard for us to keep; too far to go; too restricting to obey."

Sound familiar! We hear those same words from many pastors and churches and people today. God's Word is clear, but man just does not want to accept it. It's too far to go to Jerusalem, but not too far to go to Dan, which is twice as far to the north.

God declares that women should not usurp man's authority in the church and teach over men; therefore they are not to be pastors or to vote in the church. But that is too hard, too restrictive, too great a burden; so man changes it.

God clearly declares that He and He alone created the world out of nothing and did it with His powerful Word in six 24 hour days. But that is too hard to believe, too restrictive, especially in this enlightened age of science. So man changes God's Word and comes up with an evolutionistic process that God set into motion.

God tells us in His Word that we are to worship and pray with only those who teach His Word in its truth and purity and we are to come out from among those and avoid those who teach otherwise. But that is too restrictive, too hard to keep, too much a burden to bear. So man changes God's Word and worships with whomever and wherever he wants to.

God tells us that His Word is inerrant, infallible and verbally inspired, but that is too restrictive and too hard to believe. So man says that he must sit in judgment of the Bible and with his historical critical analysis he will decide what is fact and what is fiction in the Bible.

God clearly declares that man must keep God's Word perfectly in order to be saved. He demands perfection and tells us that we are all conceived and born in sin and are spiritually dead. But that teaching is far too restrictive, far too great a burden to bear, too hard to keep.

God says the only way to be saved is by the grace of God through Jesus Christ the one and only perfect God/Man who came to take our place and pay the punishment for us. Salvation is alone through Jesus. But that is far too restrictive. So man changes God's Word and says that man is essentially good and can do his duty to God and is accepted by God. Our own sacrifices, deeds and offerings merit this. We can make the payment. We can meet the demands and requirements. We bring the sacrifice. It is no longer God who lays down the Word, but man. Even as Jeroboam did the sacrificing, did the offerings, because he did the devising and changing of God's Word. And when people do that they change the whole method of salvation from God to man to man to God.

Our precious sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—which gives us God's grace in Christ and bestows upon us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation are changed into ordinances, commands which we must do in order to please God. The Gospel becomes more of a Law, something that we must keep and obey in order to be received by God; rather than the sweet, pure Good News that Jesus has done it all for us.

The sin of Jeroboam can so easily affect us in our response to that Gospel message. We know that our Savior's love for us will motivate us to want to live and love Him. But when our flesh gets in the way our Lord's desire for us to hear His Word continually and consistently is too hard to keep; to great a burden to bear—it is too far to go; too early to get up; too cold to go out; too busy to take the time; too many bills to pay to give too much to the Lord; too long to sit for both Bible Class and worship service.

Jeroboam's sin is our warning, but Christ's shed blood is our refuge. Just ask yourself this. What held Christ to that shameful cross? Was it the nails? The angry crowd? Pilate's decree of death? None of those things. It was His great love for us; for you and for me, for each of us individually. Divine love, amazing love, unbelievable love bound Jesus to that cross.

And all of this for me!

His holy hands were pierced in payment for the crimes I commit with my sinful hands.

His perfect feet were nailed to the cross as a ransom for the many times my feet walked in the ways of the world.

Thorns were crushed into His head in order to redeem me from my selfish, lustful thoughts.

His back was whipped so that His blood flowed to wash me clean of every spot and stain that covered me.

And He was forsaken by the Father so that I would have endless joy and peace with Him in heaven above.

“Was it for crimes that I had done He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree!”

That is our source of strength to live for Him! May the Lord preserve us with His Word in His grace.

Amen.