



MEET JEROBOAM | SESSION 1 | DR. RANDY WHITE

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES | 1 KINGS 11:1-13

Up to 1 Kings 11, Solomon has been a model king, both faithful to the Lord and the builder of the Temple to worship the Lord. But now things begin to change, and we are introduced to Solomon's seven **hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines** (v. 3). These are introduced, subtly, as a mere political arrangement, yet it was politics ill-advised (note v. 2, with Exodus 34:16). Solomon's heart had changed, and he gave **unto these in love** (v. 2). In the end, as predicted, his **wives turned away his heart after other gods** (v. 4).

Thus, the united monarchy was in one sense at its pinnacle of power, and at another was rotten to the core.

Verses 1-4 give the general assessment, while verses 5-8 give specifics of the idolatry introduced into Solomon's life, and thus into the kingdom. It is a picture of a once-great kingdom that was experiencing internal rot, and thus was doomed even before clear political divisions began the upcoming civil war.

One wonders how Solomon could have gone here, after penning the words of Proverbs 5:20-21. He wrote proverbs of wisdom, he built the Temple, he expressed the love of God for Israel in the Song of Solomon, and now he himself has drifted into the very things he warned against and left the God he loved.

Because Solomon **kept not that which the LORD commanded** (v. 10) the Lord promised to **rend the kingdom from thee** (v. 11). This would take place with two qualifications. First **one tribe** (v. 13) would be given **to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake** (v. 13). Second, this would not take place until after Solomon's death (v. 12).

Verse 11 introduces Jeroboam, the focus of our study. The Kingdom (save one tribe) would be given by God **to thy servant**. At this point the servant is unknown, but later in this chapter he will be introduced.

SMALL-TIME ADVERSARIES | 1 KINGS 11:14-25

In verses 14-28 there are three adversaries to Solomon introduced. The word **adversary** is the Hebrew word *satan*, thus three *satanim* come into the story: Hadad (14-22), Rezon (23-25), and Jeroboam (26-28). It is only in the Greek Scriptures that the Hebrew word *satan* becomes a "name" for the devil.

The first two adversaries are only *cracks in the foundation*. Hadad (14-22), an enemy of David who had fled to Egypt for asylum, and then Rezon (vv. 23-25), who also was a long-time enemy and **reigned over Syria** (v. 25).

So, the political picture when Jeroboam comes on the scene is one of a rotting nation with “pesky” enemies who are working in the background to undermine the kingdom.

INTRODUCING JEROBOAM | 1 KINGS 11:26-28

VERSE 26 -

In comes **Jeroboam the son of Neat, an Ephrathite** who is introduced as **Solomon’s servant**.

Note that the word **Ephrathite** can be used as a descendent of Ephraim (as here) or a resident of the region around Bethlehem (as in Ruth 1:1). The two usages of the word are not related.

The first action of Jeroboam we see is that **he lifted up his hand against the king**. But in the political situation at hand, we are not yet told whether this is a *good* thing or a *bad* thing.

VERSE 27 –

Verse 27 explains **the cause** of Jeroboam’s actions but gives little insight. What was it about the building of **Millo** and the repairing of **the breaches of the city of David** that was such a problem to Jeroboam?

According to 2 Samuel 5:9, Millo was near David’s palace, and appears to be an open space between the Temple and the palace. 1 Kings 9:24 indicates that after building a palace for one of his wives (the Pharaoh’s daughter), Solomon then built Millo. It seems reasonable to assume that the building of Millo was on previously open territory, and that Pharaoh’s daughter was connected to this in some way.

The “repairing” of the **breaches of the city** may not be a *repair* in the sense we normally understand. In fact, the KJV translators put a translator’s note that says “closed.”

My interpretation (along with many Jewish rabbi’s) is that Solomon *closed the gap* between the Temple and the Palace. In doing so, he “filled in” a public open space and gathering point to the Temple, and perhaps even made access to the Temple itself difficult.

This caused Jeroboam, Solomon’s servant, to say, *enough is enough* and he rose up against the King.

VERSE 28 –

It is possible (even likely) that verse 28 “backs up” to introduce Jeroboam *before* he rose up against the King. The verse tells us how Jeroboam to into the place of leadership to begin with.

He is introduced as **a mighty man of valour**. This same phrase is used in the Bible to describe Gideon (Judges 6:12), Jephthah (Judges 11:1), and Eliada (2 Chron. 17:17). In addition, **he was industrious** and so was made **ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph**, thus the tribes of Manassah and Ephraim. As ruler, his greatest task would have, perhaps, been the gathering of the ever-increasing taxes imposed by Solomon, which may explain his indignation at the building of Millo.