



JEROBOAM AND THE PROPHET | SESSION 2 | DR. RANDY WHITE

A PROPHET'S WORD | 1 KINGS 11:29-39

VERSE 29 –

The mysterious **Ahijah the Shilonite** is unknown other than this passage. Shiloh was the location of the Tabernacle. There are several other men named Ahijah in the Scripture, but they are different individuals.

This passage seems to make most sense if we take verse 28, with the appointment of Jeroboam as preceding verse 26, and verse 29 also then taking place *prior to* the time in which Jeroboam **lifted up his hand against the king** (v. 26).

If we take verse 29 to be the account of Jeroboam's experience with Ahijah almost immediately after being appointed **ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph** (v. 28), then the **new garment** was likely some kind of royal robe given for his new position (compare Genesis 41:42 and Esther 8:15). Now, being **clad...with a new garment** he finds himself **alone in the field** with Ahijah.

VERSES 30-32

Ahijah dramatically pulled the garment off Jeroboam and **rent it in twelve pieces** (v. 30), representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Note that the word **rent** is the past-tense of the word *rend* and is not associated with the noun *rent* at all. The verb means "To tear, pull, or rip (something) away from its proper place or current position"¹.

Jeroboam was instructed that he would receive **ten tribes** (v. 31) and that **one tribe** would be preserved under Solomon.

Of course, it doesn't take a mathematician to know that 11 plus 1 does not equal 12, and thus some consideration of the Tribes of Israel is in order. Anyone who studies the Scriptures in depth will see that there are 12 sons of Jacob but 13 tribes. This is because Joseph received a double blessing and has not just one tribe, but two (Ephraim and Manasseh). No Biblical list contains 13 tribes, but always 12. Therefore, in any account of tribes, one tribe will always be left out. Most often left off the list is the tribe of Levi, because as a priestly tribe given to the Lord it did not receive an allotment of land. But how do we have only one tribe left to Solomon's reign? Most likely, the tribe of Levi is once again not counted. The tribe of Benjamin *originally* went with the north but did not remain, and the tribe of *Simeon* had already been absorbed into Judah and was "part and parcel" of Judah.

It is interesting that the text uses a rare word for **garment**, using the Hebrew word **שְׁלֵמָה**. Compare this with the Hebrew form of the name *Solomon*: **שְׁלֹמֹה**. The only difference are the vowel markings, which are modern. It seems without a doubt that the writer wanted to specifically claim that *Solomon was going to be ripped in pieces*.

¹ "rend, v.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2023. Web. 29 March 2023.)

Whether this prophecy was *prior to* the rebellion (as I have interpreted) or *after* the rebellion, Jeroboam certainly wouldn't forget the message. And the message was that *Jeroboam was going to be king*.

VERSE 33 –

Even at the time Jeroboam was chosen (v. 28), Solomon had allowed his many wives to lead him away from the worship of the one true God and into the worship of the pagan gods of the surrounding nations. This was the reason that the Kingdom would be destroyed.

VERSES 34-36 –

The Lord promises to allow Solomon to be a **prince all the days of his life** (v. 34). The word **prince** should be understood in its older and Biblical usage as “A person who has the chief authority in any society or group”². Note that this is the *only* way the word is used in the Scriptures, never used in its more modern meaning of *the son of a King*.

Solomon is going to be on the throne **for David my servant's sake** (v. 34). This is an earthly reward for David because **he kept my commandments and my statutes** (v. 34).

Once again, **one tribe** (v. 36) is promised to Solomon's lineage. This is done to fulfill promises to David.

VERSES 37-38 –

What an amazing promise to Jeroboam! He lost his new robe, but he gained a throne and *a blank check from God!* God was going to give Jeroboam *free reign* in a *new reign* as King.

The *blank check* did have some qualifications. Jeroboam was required to serve the Lord obediently, keeping the Lord's **statutes** and **commandments** (i.e.: the Torah).

God promised to **build thee a sure house** (v. 38) for Jeroboam. This is not a reference to a dwelling place, but rather to a dynasty.

Why do Christians “name and claim” some passages and not others? Few (if any) take God's powerful promises to Jeroboam and count them as their own. However, similar passages given to others are often self-appropriated, even by conservative Christians. (see Joshua 1:8 and Jeremiah 29:11, for two striking examples). We would do well to *take the recipient literally* all through the Bible.

VERSE 39 –

The division of the kingdom was intended to be a curse on Judah (**the seed of David**) and a blessing on the ten tribes of the North, who could escape this curse. However, because of *sin heaped up*, the northern tribes jumped from the frying pan into the fire!

² “prince, n.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2023. Web. 29 March 2023