

Chapter 14 – A Kingdom Torn in Two

This is the Sunday on which we celebrate our 150th anniversary. **There will no Bible study at 10:00 a.m.** but at some point you will want to read Chapter 14 of THE STORY in preparation for the readings for next Sunday.

The italicized summary that begins this chapter has this to say, “. . .the other tribes, had grown to resent Solomon’s heavy taxation and conscripted labor for his grand projects.” In fact, Solomon’s practices as king matched exactly Samuel’s warning on page 110. Even worse, Solomon used forced labor from every tribe except his own tribe of Judah. No wonder “the other tribes” were resentful. Solomon’s downfall reveals the inevitable linkage between idolatry and social injustice. God had laid out specific commands for the way that the Israelites were to treat each other. If these had been followed, the huge gap between rich and poor in Solomon’s time would not have developed. And forcing fellow Israelites to work against their will was strictly forbidden by God. Solomon may have rationalized his neglect of God’s instructions as only a proper response to progress. After all, that was then; this is now. Those teachings were for nomads wandering around in the desert. Now he had a tremendous global economy to deal with and that old stuff about looking after the poor just was not practical any more than it was practical to be so narrow-minded as to worship only one God. We will see this theme repeated. When God is not worshiped whole-heartedly and exclusively by God’s people, then we lose sight of God’s concerns --- exploitation and injustice are the inevitable result. The consequences of exploitation and injustice are social unrest and disunity. Solomon’s son Rehoboam was to suffer the consequences of his father’s practices and he added his own arrogance and stupidity to the mix.

Why did Jereboam (king of Israel in the north) set up places of worship in competition with the temple Solomon had built in Jerusalem?

Did Rehoboam recognize and undo the idolatry that Solomon had allowed to flourish in Judah (the southern kingdom)?

After a number of assassinations and coups in the northern kingdom of Israel, Omri became king and moved the capital of Israel to Samaria, where it remained for the rest of the existence of the northern kingdom. After Omri, his son Ahab became king of Israel. Ahab followed the religion of his wife Jezebel, who was a

Phoenician from Sidon (on the Mediterranean coast) and a devout worshiper of Baal, the principal Canaanite deity.

Thoughts on Christian maturity

On this historic anniversary in the life of our church, what are the characteristics of mature Christians that we are going to need to follow Jesus into the next years with their challenges and changes?