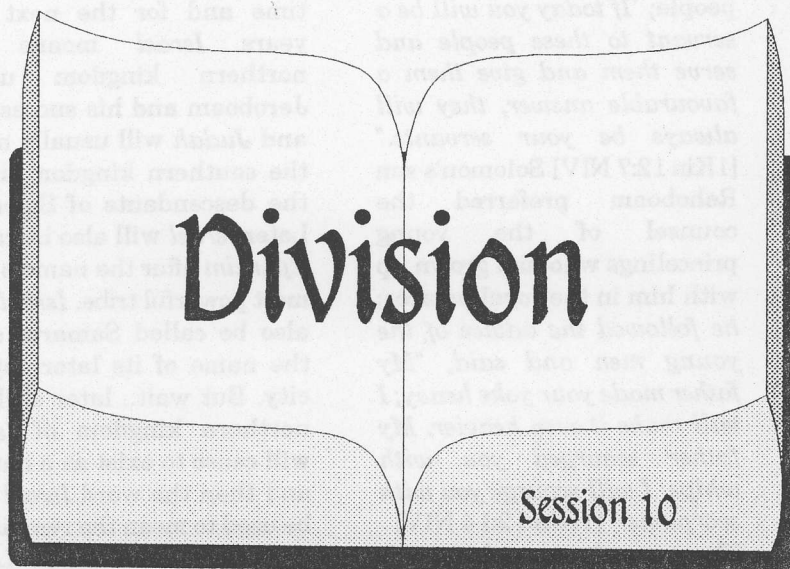




At the end of Solomon's reign the Covenant people had been in their promised land for over 600 years. For most of that time they had struggled to maintain their hold on the land. For the previous 120 years there had been a new development; kings. Saul, David and Solomon all reigned for a period of approximately 40 years each. Each reign began with great hope and degenerated into acute disappointment.

The most tragic of all was Solomon. As regards his potential there never was a greater king, but the greatest hope left the greatest disappointment. From his long reign only four events are found to his credit; his choice of wisdom rather than riches, his prayer at the temple dedication, his blessing after the temple dedication, and his writings.

His greatest achievement was also his greatest folly. It is sad to have to record it but the Temple was built with slave

labour. 10,000 Israelites were conscripted and treated very harshly [1Kings 5:13,14 12:4,10,11] 150,000 heathen were used in the quarries and as burden bearers. Graham Scroggie says "they laboured without reward, perished without pity, and suffered without redress". So we have this terrible anomaly. A holy place for God built with the sweat and blood of slaves. So often, it seems, in the world's history the right thing is done in the wrong way, or the wrong thing done is the right way. 700 hundred years earlier the people of Israel had been the building slaves of Pharaoh. Now during Solomon's reign we have an action-replay, only the characters are different.

The books of Kings and Chronicles are complementary. Often Chronicles gives the precise details from the royal archives, but Kings often give the darker side of the story. Chronicles misses out the details of the sins and follies of David and Solomon. It is

the official record. Kings completes the account by revealing the spiritual facts behind the official events of Chronicles. It is the book of 1 Kings which fills in the sordid background to the magnificence of the temple.

And yet God came to that Temple and inhabited it. There is a favourite quotation of mine from the writings of Anthony Norris Groves; *what a blessing it is that the Lord's heart is so large, that He can help wherever He finds some good thing; whereas man withdraws, because he sees some evil thing, which is generally found to mean something that wounds his own self-love in the little scheme he had set up as perfection.*

Solomon was linked with the writing of three special portions of the scripture. The Song of Solomon, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Perhaps they mirror three periods of his life; first-love, powerless ideals, and the desperate disillusionment of a man who enjoyed every indulgence and found everything empty of the power to satisfy him. Solomon; the world's wisest fool. Perhaps it is significant that no prophet arose during the reign of Solomon. We can have the outward perfections but without the prophetic edge the result is lifeless splendour.

The Temple whose design had been revealed to David became the centre of the nation's life. Its dimensions were exactly the double of those for the Tabernacle, and the furniture added many details to the pattern that had been given to Moses. This

magnificent building stood for over 400 hundred years, and became the symbol of God's age-lasting covenant with the Covenant People. It was finally plundered and destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar in approximately 587 BC.

changing the rules

Solomon changed the idea of kingship for Israel. The laws of Moses had been designed to prevent Israel's king behaving like the kings of the other nations. Solomon ignored them. Among the specific laws which Solomon broke was that of not multiplying women to himself. According to the biblical record Solomon had at

behave graciously towards his people; *"If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants."* [1 Kin 12:7 NIV] Solomon's son Rehoboam preferred the counsel of the young princelings who had grown up with him in the royal palaces; *he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."* [1 Kin 12:14 NIV] These words were the spark which ignited the flame. The nation split. When Rehoboam's agent tried to

mean? Officially from this time and for the next 250 years *Israel* means the northern kingdom under Jeroboam and his successors, and *Judah* will usually mean the southern kingdom under the descendants of Solomon. Later *Israel* will also be called *Ephraim* after the name of the most powerful tribe. *Israel* will also be called Samaria after the name of its later capital city. But wait.. later still the northern kingdom of *Israel* will cease to exist as a nation, and then the word *Israel* will be used to mean the remaining people of God in *Judah*. Later still Judah too will go into captivity and only a tiny remnant (less than 0.5% of the

975-722 BC		The Divided Monarchy				253 years	
Conflict		Alliance		Conflict			
Judah	Israel	Judah	Israel	Judah	Israel		
Rehoboam to Asa 975-914 BC	Jeroboam to Omri 975-918 BC	Jehoshaphat to Jehoash 914-838 BC	Ahab to Jehoahaz 918-838 BC	Amaziah to Hezekiah 839-722 BC	Joash to Hoshea 829-722 BC		
1 Kings 12-16 2 Chron 10-16		1 Kings 16-2 Kings 13 2 Chron 17-24		2 Kings 13-18 2 Chron 25-29			

the changing relationship between the two kingdoms

least 1000 women and only one son. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon and Naamah, an Ammonite woman. His one son inherited none of Solomon's wisdom but did inherit Solomon's proud spirit.

When Rehoboam came to the throne on the death of Solomon unrest was already building among the people. The wise old counsellors who had known David's days counselled Rehoboam to

collect the taxes they tried to stone him. [1 Kings 12:17-19] The people rallied to Jeroboam the son of Nebat as had been prophesied during Solomon's reign. Solomon had not repented neither had his son and Jeroboam became king of Israel.

who are Israel?

From this point on in the bible account we shall always have to ask a question. When the bible says *Israel* who does it

Israel of David's day) will return to the land. This tiny remnant of a remnant of a remnant (I'm not stuttering!) will then be known as *Israel*. Later still the church of Christ will be referred to as *Israel*.

Is there any simple way of keeping a track of the word *Israel*? Perhaps there is. *Israel* is the Covenant people. They became God's special covenant people on the legal basis of a covenant established at Sinai

under the mediatorship of Moses. The terms were that they would be God's people if they kept the covenant. This covenant people is *Israel*. There are two verses of scripture which make his connection very clear: *Happy [art] thou, O Israel: who [is] like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who [is] the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.* [Deut 33:29] and also *Happy [is that] people, that is in such a case: [yea], happy [is that] people, whose God [is] the LORD.* [Psalm 144:15]

God's purpose in choosing Jeroboam the son of Nebat was to establish a dynasty which would rule over God's covenant people. Rehoboam the son of Solomon was to have a single tribe as the token of God's kindness to the family of David. In the event Jeroboam was even more wicked than Rehoboam and the people he reigned over completely abandoned their covenant with God. God abandoned them and gave them into Assyrian slavery. They were no longer *Israel*. The covenant then reverted to the faithful in Judah who prophetically became *Israel*. After Judah's later defection and faithlessness and their captivity in Babylon a tiny remnant returned to the land and the covenant reverted to them. This tiny remnant are then referred to as *all Israel* in the book of Ezra. [Ezra 2:70]

Israel is the title of the continuing covenant people of God. That covenant was only ever intended to be a temporary provision. It was

until the Seed; Christ. This is one of the special themes of Galatians. That special covenant entered into at Sinai ended with the death of Christ. There is now a new covenant and a new covenant people; a new *Israel*.

Time Lines

Following the story line of the bible becomes much more complicated from the time of the divided monarchy. In the southern kingdom of Judah the descendants of David reigned for almost 400 years; a single dynasty. In the northern kingdom of Israel, which only existed for approximately 250 years, nine separate family-dynasties reigned. It is further complicated by the fact that the names of kings sometimes change and different men have the same name. As if this wasn't sufficient complication the writings of some prophets who lived at different times in the two different kingdoms have all been gathered together at the end of the Old Testament. It will be part of our task in these next few studies to put all this into time-order.

We have said previously that the bible does not attempt to be a chronicle of world history but is a highly selective God's-eye-view of key events in the unfolding drama of redemption. As regards world consequences Israel was always a minor player. It never aspired or rose to be a super power. Super powers however did exist and their existence and Israel's have an effect upon each other.

The main super-powers of those days were in the area we now call the near or middle

east. The continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa are joined historically by the land bridge which is the land of Canaan. When African empires wanted to expand the land of Canaan was always the route. When the empires of Asia wanted to counterattack, again it was the land of Canaan which was the route. Later when the empires of Europe moved east it would be the land of Canaan which provided the route. In the next studies we shall continually hear the marching feet of the super-powers; Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Alexander of Macedon, the mighty Roman empire. In the ebb and flow of wars and more wars the purposes of God were being fulfilled. Ultimately through the fog of war there would be seen the clear shape of *the fulness of times* in which time God would *send forth His Son*. [Gal 4:4]

to battle

Rehoboam's reaction was to join with the tribe of Benjamin and attack the northern kingdom and bring it back by force, but Shemaiah, the man of God, brought a word which forbade the action. Although God had given strong promises to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Jeroboam had little confidence in them. He reasoned that because the Temple was still under Rehoboam's protection and authority the tribes would soon come back under Rehoboam's control. He did something which is a constant temptation to the people of God; he used natural means to secure a promise.

He reasoned that the Temple would be an irresistible attraction to the people whom God had trusted to him, so he

devised an alternative attraction. He made two golden calves and placed them in the strategic extremities of his kingdom; one at Bethel and the other at Dan. Having provided an alternative religious base he then went on to provide an alternative priesthood, and alternative ceremonies. The judgment of the book of Kings is final; *So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, [even] in the month which he had devised of his*

own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense. [1Kings 12] This provoked other prophetic words. The sum of these was that Jeroboam's dynasty would come to a premature end.

Jeroboam started the northern kingdom of Israel in a direction which never altered. Over twenty times the scripture refers in some way to *Jeroboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin.* The

sails were set. Through 19 kings in 9 dynasties Israel never had a king who served them well. (in the charts which follow a new dynasty is marked with the new king in *italics*) With no respite in the wickedness of the generations judgment would come more speedily than to the southern kingdom. In the southern kingdom of Judah things were much more mixed. Occasional good kings, and periods of national repentance slowed the coming judgments.

South (Judah)	North (Israel)	Reign began	for...	Death	Good or Bad	Prophets	Gentiles	Kings	Chron
Rehoboam		975 BC	17 yrs	died	Bad	Iddo, Shemaiah	Egypt invades	1K 12, 14	2Ch 10-12
	Jeroboam	975 BC	22 yrs	judged	Bad	Iddo, Ahijah		1K 12-14	
Abijah		958 BC	3 yrs	died	Bad			1K 15	2 Ch 12-14
Asa		955 BC	41 yrs	died	Good	Hanani, Azariah	Ethiopian attack, Alliance with Syria against Baasha	1 K 15	2 Ch 14-16
	Nadab	954 BC	2 yrs	killed in battle	Bad			1 K 15	
	Baasha	953 BC	24 yrs	died	Bad	Jehu	invasion by Syria	1 K 15-16	
	Elah	930 BC	2 yrs	assassinated	Bad			1 K 16	
	Zimri	929 BC	7 days	suicide	Bad			1 K 16	
	Omri	929 BC	12 yrs	died	Bad			1 K 16	
	Ahab	918 BC	22 yrs	killed in battle	Bad	Elijah, Micaiah	war with Syria. peace, and renewal of war	1 K 16-22	

The relationship between Rehoboam and Jeroboam is summed up in the phrase *there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days*. [1Kings 14:30] Rehoboam also had trouble with the Super-Power of Egypt. He was only five years into his reign when Shishak king of Egypt invaded Judah and attacked Jerusalem. The treasures, rather than the holy furniture, were stripped. There is a note here which sums up the decline which had already set in. *Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace.* [1Kin 14:25-27 NIV]

from gold to bronze

It is said of one of the Caesars that he found Rome brick and left it marble. Of Rehoboam it may be said he found the nation gold and left it bronze.

The two rival kings died within a few years of each other and their sons succeeded them. Rehoboam's son was Abijam who reigned for 3 short years. The record says that he *walked in all the sins*

of his father. The slide continued. During his short reign hostilities with the northern kingdom continued. [1 Kings 15:7] Jeroboam was still reigning in the north when Rehoboam's grandson Asa became king over Judah.

Asa had only been king of

Tracing the history of these kings can be difficult. The ancient way of recording history was to trace a man's life from beginning to end before starting on a new topic or subject. It is not in the form which we are most used to.

Our pattern is to begin with an individual and to continue his story until the new characters join the story. We introduce a new person at his point in history and then keep his story running parallel to the first character. We then have two (or often more) stories running at the same time.

The ancient method was much more useful if you wanted to concentrate on one person at a time, but not so useful if you want to compare one man with another.

Judah for a short time when Jeroboam, king of Israel, died and was succeeded by his son Nadab. A conspiracy arose against Nadab and Nadab moved to quell it. In the ensuing seige of the conspirators stronghold Nadab was killed. The dynasty of Jeroboam the son Nebat which had begun as God's gift was over. The conspirator Baasha took the throne of the northern kingdom. Baasha reigned for 24 years. His reign was one continual conflict.

The time of Asa shows how vulnerable the little kingdom of Judah was. The record tells us that for the first 10 years of his reign the land was quiet.

[2 Chr 14] and that *Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD his God*. Asa took action against false religion and immorality. He pulled down idolatrous shrines and destroyed the images. He removed the sodomites (homosexuals) from the land, and stripped his mother of her royal privileges on account of her idolatry. [1Kings 15] He also used these quiet years to rebuild the defences of his kingdom and rearmed his army. [2Chr 14]

war again

His foresight was wise. A massive Egyptian army moved on him from the south, under Zerah the Cushite. [2Chr 14] Asa went believing the best form of defense to be attack went out to oppose them.

Although Asa had prepared for this eventuality his confidence was in God; *And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, [it is] nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou [art] our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians (Cushites) before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.* [2Chr 14]

What a wonderful combination of faith and works are balanced in that little phrase; *we rest on thee and in thy name we go...*

The armies of Judah and Benjamin completely routed the invaders. They pursued them and gathered vast spoils. Three times in the last verse of the chapter we are told of the spoils which the people of Asa gained at this time. After the disastrous reigns of Jeroboam and Abijam this was a complete reversal of direction. The nation was now under a godly and wise king. Idolatry and immorality had been checked and the future looked full of promise.

more dangers

Asa however had other enemies, and Asa didn't always behave wisely. From the north Baasha king of Israel mounted a campaign against Judah. He moved against king Asa in Judah and blocked his access with a fortress city. Asa's treasuries were now replenished from their victory over the Cushites. He took from the temple and royal treasures and purchased an alliance with Syria. Syria attacked Baasha kingdom from the north and Baasha broke off his attack on Judah. [1Kings 15 2Chr 16]

There are indications that during the latter part of his reign Asa relied less upon God. His motto of *we rest on thee and in thy name we go* was forgotten. In relying on an alliance with Syria he had revealed his absence of faith in God and God faithfully reminded him of it. Hanani the prophet came with a word of rebuke; *because thou hast relied on the king of Syria and not relied upon the LORD thy God...* God's intention had been to give Asa continual victory against the Egyptians, against Baasha and ultimately

against Syria itself. Asa short-circuited this plan by hiring Syria against Baasha. The consequence would be continual war.

David and Asa

It is instructive to compare Asa and David. When David was rebuked by the prophet Nathan David immediately repented. When Asa was rebuked by the prophet Hanani Asa imprisoned the prophet. *Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.* [2Chr 16:10 NIV] David humbled himself and found immediate forgiveness. Asa digs his heels in and loses everything. The post-script to his reign is tragic; *In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the 41st year of his reign* [2Chr 16:12,13 NIV]

short and bloody

During the last years of his reign Asa witnessed tumultuous changes in the hostile kingdom of Israel. Baasha, king of northern Israel died and was succeeded by his son Elah. Elah reigned for only 2 years when he was assassinated by one of his commanders. Zimri, captain of half the chariot force of Israel, then proclaimed himself king. His reign was short and bloody. He wiped out the entire family and court of Baasha's dynasty.

Another military man Omri, the commander in chief of

Israel's army, hearing of the palace coup marched against Zimri. Omri laid siege to Zimri's position at Tirzah. Zimri, seeing that battle with Omri was a forgone conclusion, committed suicide by burning the palace down with himself still in it. Zimri's bloody reign had lasted for 7 days. There now followed a short civil war within Israel itself as rival claimants fought for the throne. The other claimant was named Tibni. The record is somewhat brutal in its brevity; *so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.* [1Kings 16]

Watching from Jerusalem Asa the king of Judah has seen the passing of 5 kings reigning over Israel. Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri have all *gone the way of all flesh*. Their godless reigns have all come to an end. The throne of Israel has passed through 3 families and is now in the possession of a fourth.

worse still

The decline of Israel becomes even more sharp at this point. Omri was a strong man and a wicked man. It is recorded that *Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that [were] before him.* [1Kin 16:25] He was a military strategist and moved the base of his reign to a place that could be more easily defended; *Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned for twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill.* [1Kin 16:23,24 NIV]

and still worse

The decline dips even more steeply with Omri's son, Ahab. Omri reigned for 12 years, and was followed by a son who was even worse than Omri. *Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.* [1Kin 16:30 NIV] Omri took as his wife the daughter of the king of Sidon. Her name was Jezebel. Jeroboam's sin had been to mix the evil with the true. He altered the true

faith of the nation. Ahab and more especially his wife changed it completely. They instituted the worship of Baal as the state religion. The conscious rebellion of those days is conveyed by the record that is was during this time that the city of Jericho was rebuilt. A thing expressly forbidden by God. [Jos 6:26

Kings 16:34]

It may seem that such an act would be the last straw but God has still not given up on this rebellious people. The next chapter opens with the startling words; *And Elijah the Tishbite, [who was] of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, [As] the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.* [1Kin 17:1]

Modern newsreaders often refer to London or Washington meaning the UK or the US.

The Bible sometimes does a similar thing. From this time on we shall sometimes read of *Samaria*, meaning the northern kingdom of Israel from the name of its capital city.

In the New Testament the term *Samaria* refers to a district in between Judah and Galilee.