

HOW TO REACH THE JEW FOR CHRIST

by

Daniel Fuchs

Copyright © 1943

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The materials for this lesson will be presented under the following headings:

- A. The Division of the Kingdom
- B. The Kingdom of Israel
- C. The Kingdom of Judah

A. The Division of the Kingdom

1. The Contributing Causes

Solomon's magnificent court cost a huge sum of money. The large army was constantly draining the treasury. The extravagance of the king's courtiers, the satisfying of the expensive whims of Solomon's wives, the costs of administration, of defense, of political splendor—all raised the government expenses to unbelievable levels. Either the government must retrench or raise more revenue. The government did not retrench; it balanced the budget by taxation. The farther away the people were removed from the place of the wanton extravagance the more they complained about the burdensome taxation.

The old sores of tribal jealousy once more began to fester. David and Solomon were from the tribe of Judah. The Northern tribes resented the fact that wealth and power were concentrated in the tribe of Judah. They asked, "**What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.**" As complaints increased it became obvious that a rupture was inevitable.

2. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE

After Solomon's death, representatives of the ten tribes under Jeroboam went to the court of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and demanded a reduction in the taxes. Rehoboam was taught in the wisdom of Solomon, but, like most young men, he followed the actions, not the words, of his father. A bit of decency and tact would have averted serious trouble. He rejected the advice of his father's counselors for the flattering argument of his rowdy friends. In answer to Jeroboam and his delegation, he said, "**I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.**"

The ten Northern tribes renounced their allegiance to Rehoboam. Rehoboam's chief tax-collector was stoned when he tried to collect the taxes. The breach was now permanent.

In the divided kingdom, the ten Northern tribes were the kingdom of Israel; the two Southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) became the kingdom of Judah.

Israel had more land, more fertile land, and a much larger population than Judah. Yet Judah had other advantages for herself. With her mountain fortresses she was far more secure than her more prosperous neighbor. She had natural protection from her enemies, but her true worship of God was her greatest protection.

A continuous line of God-appointed priests served in the Temple services. These services exerted a steadying influence upon all, even upon reckless kings and princes. It was when the priesthood became corrupt that destruction finally overtook Judah.

Meanwhile God loved both nations. In both countries He had faithful followers and to both He sent His faithful prophets.

B. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

More as a political strategy than from religious motives, Jeroboam discouraged the worship of God at Jerusalem. He desired to hinder his people from renewing their allegiance to the house of David.

He erected shrines at Bethel in the South and Dan in the North. At these shrines he erected two golden calves. At their dedication, he said: **"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."**

God's prophets thundered against this blasphemous worship, but the successors of Jeroboam **"walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin."**

None of the kings of Israel were good men; they were either as bad as Jeroboam or worse. Because of this the history of the Northern Kingdom is a record of war and bloodshed.

A low point in the history of Israel was reached in the reign of Ahab. Weak-willed, Ahab was spineless—he always allowed himself to be domineered by stronger personalities. He married Jezebel, a Phoenician, and through her instituted in Israel the worship of Baal, the god of the Phoenicians. The priests of God were slain and God's altars were broken down.

Suddenly a rugged, fearless prophet of God appeared before the court. His name was Elijah. He was God's messenger to oppose the mighty tide of wickedness and to call the people to repentance. He fearlessly reprovved Ahab and Jezebel, preached stirring messages to the people, wrought miracles, and climaxed his marvelous career by a great victory over the priests of Baal at Mount Carmel. His ministry was effective for a while in turning the people back to God.

Elijah's successor was Elisha, who traveled throughout the country, working miracles and exhorting the people to godliness. The tide was turned for a while, but the people were too far gone. The revival under Elijah and Elisha was short-lived. The downward tendency of the people was soon resumed.

God sent other prophets, notably Hosea and Amos, to rebuke the people and to warn them of the effect of their folly but they were **"wedded to their idols."**

In 722 B.C., Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, captured the stronghold of Samaria. Proud Samaria was plundered and destroyed. Many of the people perished in the invasion; others escaped into Judah; the remainder were taken captive and colonized in small groups throughout the Assyrian Empire. In time the ten tribes lost their racial and national identity.

The proud nation of Israel exists historically now only in the fanciful legends of the "Ten Lost Tribes."

God's punishment was long delayed but it came at last. Judah alone remained to carry on the promise of the Messiah. We shall now study the history of this Southern Kingdom.

C. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The people of the kingdom of Judah were more united than their brethren to the North; besides this, the moral and spiritual conditions were much better. Because the people of Judah were more loyal to the Lord, they existed as a nation for one hundred and thirty-five more years than Israel.

Within the borders of Judah was the Temple with its steadying influence. Judah had several godly kings among her nineteen rulers. Among them were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah.

The great prophet Isaiah ministered to a number of Judah's kings. At times he persuaded the kings to obey God, but the general trend was downward. Ahaz rejected Isaiah's advice and entered into an alliance with Assyria. The Assyrians, as a result, oppressed Judah for more than a century.

During the declining years of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah warned the people of imminent judgment for their sins. He foretold the Captivity but also prophesied the Restoration. He reminded them of God's faithfulness to His covenant and foretold the new covenant which would last forever through the Messiah.

Despite all of God's graciousness, sin resulted in national decay and the people were led into captivity.

During the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land and carried many of the people to Babylon as captives; among these captives was Daniel. Seven years later, in 598 B.C., ten thousand more of the people were forcibly removed by Nebuchadnezzar. Among these were King Jehoiakim and the prophet Ezekiel.

Still later, in 587 B.C., when Zedekiah spurned the advice of Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, carried the upper classes to Babylon, and left only the poorer of the people to till the land.

Because of their sin, God had allowed the nation of Israel to be taken into captivity and finally lost among the nations.

Judah did not learn from the example of her sister nation. She too sinned, and was led into captivity. However, for David's sake, and because the Messiah was to come from Judah, God preserved this nation for His honor and glory in the midst of their captivity.

* * *

THIS LESSON APPLIED TO JEWISH MISSIONS

As we approach nearer to the time of the life and ministry of the Messiah, the prophetic signs become clearer. The prophets of the kingdom of Israel exhorted the people to faithfulness toward God. The prophets to the kingdom of Judah also exhorted the people to faithfulness, but since the Messiah was to come from Judah, these prophets also preached concerning His coming.

It was given to Isaiah to see many majestic visions concerning the Messiah; His birth, His sufferings, rejection, and death and atonement for our sins. These marvelous prophecies will be studied in a different course.

Marvelous as the prophecies of Isaiah are, it was for Jeremiah to first bring the message of the new covenant. He realized that the Messiah's kingdom could not come to a sinful people. Only a people with a new heart, a new law and a new covenant could receive the Messiah.

EXAMINATION

1. Explain two remote causes for the division of the people.
2. What was the immediate cause?
3. Compare Israel and Judah as to:
 - a. area
 - b. number of people
 - c. faithfulness to God
4. Name the capitals of Israel and Judah.
5. To whom was Elijah sent?
6. After the following names write the kingdom to which they were sent.
 - a. Elisha
 - b. Isaiah
 - c. Hosea

- d. Ezekiel
- e. Daniel
- f. Jeremiah
- g. Elijah
- h. Amos

7. Name four good kings of Judah.

8. Why was Judah preserved?

~ end of chapter 5 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
