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“Divided Kingdom, Divided Hearts”

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After the death of King Solomon, civil war divided the nation of Israel into the Northern kingdom, which retained the name, Israel (10 tribes), and the Southern kingdom, which was called Judah (Benjamin and Judah). Each kingdom installed a king. Not only was the kingdom divided, the hearts of the people were also divided. Idolatry was prevalent among the people, and they wavered between the worship of idols and worshipping God.

In this study, we’ll look at the prophet Elijah and the showdown he had with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and how he also confronted the people of Israel about their indecision.

The Divided Kingdom

1. Solomon’s 700 pagan wives and his 300 pagan concubines led Solomon, who then led the nation, to worship three primary false gods.
 - a. Ashtoreth – The worship of the Sidonian goddess of fertility, included prostitution and all kinds of immoral sexual practices.
 - b. Chemosh – The worship of this Moabite god included child sacrifice.
 - c. Molech – The worship of this Ammonite god included child sacrifice.

2. It’s unimaginable, but Solomon, the man who asked for and received God’s wisdom, fell into sin and idolatry, and he went so far as to build shrines to these gods on the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives.
 - a. Today, the Valley of Ben Hinnom is called the Valley of the Children.

3. **1 Kings 11:9-13** – *“The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him*

twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.' "

4. The legacy of Solomon would be the divided kingdom.
5. Even though there were 1,000 women in Solomon's life, the Bible only records three children: two daughters, and Rehoboam, his only son.
6. Rehoboam ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah, although he attempted to rule over all of Israel, too.
7. The Temple of God was in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
8. **1 Kings 11:29-33** - *"About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country, Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he said to Jeroboam, 'Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did." ' "*
9. The Bible tells us that Jeroboam was God's choice, and God would have blessed him if he had only stayed on course with the Lord, but Jeroboam chose to do evil in the eyes of the Lord.
10. Jeroboam was determined to solve the problem of where to worship God.
11. In an attempt to keep the people from going back to Jerusalem to worship, he strategically set up two cities as centers of worship: Dan in the north, and Bethel in the south, which wasn't far from Jerusalem.

12. This plan made it possible for anyone in Israel to worship God without having to go to Jerusalem.
13. **1 Kings 12:25-33** - *“Then Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built up Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, ‘The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.’ After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’ One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.”*
14. Jeroboam introduced the false calf gods of the Egyptians.
15. The result was that both kings led their people into idolatry, which makes this time one of the lowest points in the history of God’s chosen people.
16. We are wired with a desire and a capacity to worship.
17. It’s not a question of if will we worship, but what or whom we will worship?
18. If we don’t worship the true and living God, we will end up worshipping someone or some thing.

Divided Hearts

19. Mt. Carmel is actually a mountain range, which is approximately 20 miles long.
 - a. This mountain range separates the Mediterranean Sea from the Jezreel Valley, which is also approximately 20 miles long.
 - b. The southern part of the Jezreel Valley runs into Megiddo, which is why this section is known as the Valley of Megiddo.

- c. In Hebrew, Carmel means, garden of God or vineyard.
20. The biblical account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Ahserah takes place somewhere along the Mt. Carmel range.
21. King Ahab was the seventh king of Israel, and during his reign the nation was deeply involved in idol worship.
22. [1 Kings 16:29-34](#) - *“In the thirty-eight year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal ¹ in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.”*
23. Ahab had the distinction of doing two things exceptionally well, so to speak: he did more evil than anyone before him and he did more to provoke God to anger than anyone before him.
24. God raised up the prophet Elijah to confront King Ahab and the nation concerning their idolatry and their sin.
a. In Hebrew, Elijah means, my God is Yahweh.
25. The account of Elijah on Mt. Carmel is found in [1 Kings 18:17-40](#).
26. The root of the problem is found in [1 Kings 18:21](#), which says: *“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ ”*
27. The problem of having a divided heart is not unique to the people of Elijah’s day; it’s a problem that any one of us can have.
28. We must be careful not allow anything in the world or anything in this life to steal our heart and separate us from the Lord.

¹ Baal was the primary god of the Canaanites.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss [1 Kings 11:9-13](#).
3. What was it that caused Solomon, known as the wisest man in history, to fall into sin and idol worship?
4. What are some of the temptations you face that might cause to fall into sin?
5. What are some of the contemporary ways we can be tempted to participate in idol worship?
6. How has deliberately going against the Word and will of God (like Jeroboam) caused you to miss out on God's blessing and God's best?
7. Read and discuss [1 Kings 12:25-33](#) and [1 Kings 16:29-34](#).
8. Spend time talking about the dangers of wavering between following the Lord or choosing to go your own way.
9. Read and discuss [1 Kings 18:17-40](#).
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: ask the Lord to guard their heart and their mind in Christ Jesus ([Philippians 4:7](#)), so they won't live a divided life, with "one foot in the world and one foot in the church," so to speak; to examine their heart to see if there is anything that is stealing their heart away from the Lord; seek to live a wholly devoted life unto the Lord.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).