

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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The Lure of Convenience

by Terry Slack

The Biblical account of the split of the kingdom of Israel is tragic. The godly leadership of David provided peace and the wise rule of Solomon resulted in prosperity, but with the death of Solomon, things quickly change. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is convinced he will be the successor to the throne, yet God has very different plans. Due to Solomon's idolatrous compromises, the Lord had declared He would tear the kingdom away and give it to one of Solomon's servants. Yet, for the sake of David, one tribe would remain under the rule of his descendent (I Kings 11:9-13).

When the dust settles, Rehoboam rules only the southern kingdom of Judah, while Jeroboam governs ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Though his throne is established, Jeroboam still worries that one day the people will rebel and seek to reestablish their loyalty to David's lineage. His fear is compounded as he considers the regulations of Moses commanding the people to travel to Jerusalem, the capital of the rival kingdom, in order to celebrate the various feasts and to offer the required sacrifices.

God had promised through Ahijah the prophet to be with Jeroboam and build him an enduring house similar to David's. However, the promise was conditional. He must heed God's commands, walk in His ways, and do what is right (11:38-39). But rather than trust God's word, Jeroboam looks to implement his own plan. To prevent the people from making the required pilgrimages to Jerusalem, he constructs a place of worship in both Dan (in the north) and Bethel (in the south), each with their own priesthood and golden calf. And how does he go about "selling" his sinful idea? By proclaiming it to be an equal, yet more convenient substitute for God's way of doing things (12:28). There were far-reaching results of this religious "convenience."

1. Jeroboam operated from ulterior motives.

Outwardly, he verbalized his objective as simply a case of having "their best interest at heart." In truth, he was motivated by an inward compulsion to merely retain his power. While the close proximity of Jeroboam's shrines to Israel's citizens was alleged to be a legitimate convenience, the practice actually created greater distance between them and their God. His supposedly sincere innovation was in reality a subtle snare baited by a self-centered monarch.

2. Jeroboam's efforts led to greater disunity operated from ulterior motives.

The shrines at Dan and Bethel now divided a nation both physically and spiritually. Not only did he erect new places of worship, but also altered their religious calendar and priesthood (12:32). This wasn't a case of the same worship occurring in different places, but completely different worship altogether! While their common connection to Jehovah might have eased the tensions between Israel and Judah, Jeroboam's plan only accelerated the growing hostility between them in the years ahead.

3. Jeroboam's "convenient" worship diverted Israel's affections.

Similar to Aaron's declaration during the exodus (Ex. 32:4), Jeroboam proclaims his idols to be the gods that "brought you up from the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12:28). God had decreed in no uncertain terms He was not to be represented in any form (Ex. 20:1-6) and that the place of His choosing would be where they must offer their sacrifices and worship

(Deut. 12:5-7); that location would be the temple in Jerusalem (I Kings 9:3). Jeroboam's sinful plan actually kept the people from coming into God's presence and diverted worship from the true God who deserved it to the worthless idols who didn't.

4. **Jeroboam's plot would ultimately result in divine judgment.**

The seeds that appeared so innocently sown in the name of convenience, sprouted, thrived and eventually produced bitter fruit. Jeroboam's descendants would be swept away and God would "give up" Israel (14:10, 16). When conquered by the Assyrians, the inspired historian pointed the finger of accusation toward the wicked Jeroboam (II Kings 17:22-23).

AND WHAT ABOUT US?

The New Testament era has not been immune to the subtle lure of convenience.

- Human creeds have promised greater unity.
- Sprinkling has been endorsed as an equally effective means of baptism.
- Instrumental music has been added, promising to make our worship better.
- Fellowship halls have been constructed to better facilitate social interaction.
- And human institutions have been formed to make evangelism simpler.

Others aren't the only ones to fall prey to convenience. When we fail to study on our own, choosing instead to be dependent on what the preacher or Bible class teacher tell us, have we not surrendered to convenience? When we put money in the plate on Sunday, convinced we have fulfilled our evangelistic responsibility, have we indeed sought the easier route? Or when we are so preoccupied with our own selfish pursuits that we neglect the needs of our brethren, are our motives any better than Jeroboam's? If we fail to learn from his poor example and sow the same sinful seeds, we shouldn't be surprised when we reap the same bitter consequences.

THE LEGACY OF JEROBOAM IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

ELAH did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father (King **JEROBOAM**) and in his sin which he made Israel sin (I Kings 15:26).

BAASHA did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of **JEROBOAM** and in his sin which he made Israel sin (I Kings 15:34).

ZIMRI died...because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of **JEROBOAM**, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin (I Kings 16:18-19).

OMRI walked in all the way of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat and in his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel with their idols (I Kings 16:26).

It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat, that **AHAB** married Jezebel...went to serve Baal and worshiped him (I Kings 16:31).

AHAZ did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin (I Kings 22:52).

JEHORAM clung to the sins of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from them (II Kings 3:3).

But **JEHU** was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he did not depart from the sins of **JEROBOAM**, which he made Israel sin (II Kings 10:31).

JEHOASH did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not turn away from all the sins of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin, but he walked in them (II Kings 13:11).

UZZIAH did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of **JEROBOAM** the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin (II Kings 14:24).

PEKAHIAH did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from the sins of **JEROBOAM** son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin (II Kings 15:24).

PEKAH did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from the sins of **JEROBOAM** son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin (II Kings 15:28).

THE SONS OF ISRAEL walked in all the sins of **JEROBOAM** which he did; they did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel from His sight (II Kings 17:22-23).