

## 1 Kings 11:26-40 Jeroboam – The beginning, what promise (17.02.13 pm)

The **Old** Testament is as much a part of the Bible as the **New** Testament – it's looking **forward** to Jesus, who steps down from heaven in the **New**. But the **whole** Bible has something to say to us today, you can't disregard the bits that you think are out of **date** – that's what **many** are trying to do, saying the world has moved **on**, Christian beliefs have to change. Truth **remains** truth.

Anyway, I just want to start by mentioning three kings from the Old Testament and see if you recognise their **names** and what they're **known** for.

The three kings ruled between 1000 and 900BC, before Jesus was born.

- You've heard of King David, yes? Of course. The first God-chosen king of his people Israel, slayer of Goliath, he wrote a lot of the Psalms, great king and man after God's own heart.

- How about his son, Solomon – heard of **him**? Again, yes. The man chosen by God to build his temple in Jerusalem, known for his **wealth** and splendour and of course his great **wisdom**, he wrote the book of Proverbs.

- OK. What about the king who **followed** Solomon? Well, trick question!

There were actually **two**, because after Solomon, God **divided** the people of Israel. Solomon's son Rehoboam was one of the kings, but tonight and God-willing in 2 weeks time I want us to think about the **other** - Jeroboam. What's **he** remembered for? What's **his** story? What can we learn from his kingship? Well, all will be revealed in due course.

We'll read about the beginning of his story this evening. So let's turn to 1 Kings 11:26 (blue Bibles page 351).

We need firstly to talk about the situation in Israel at that time, before we come to the **promise** God gave to Jeroboam, and how he **responded** to that promise, learning on the way important things about God and our **response** to him.

**Because of the situation**, God **acts**. So we're towards the end of Solomon's magnificent reign. He was regarded very **highly** by all other nations, and we read in chapter 4:29 that '*God gave him great wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.*' As a king he was right up there, he was far and away the wealthiest and wisest king in the world. People came from all over to see.

Chapter 10:23 tells us, *'King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.'* So he was truly blessed by God. **Splendour** and majesty, all you imagine of a great king.

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So why does God say through Ahijah to Jeroboam in chapter 11:31, *'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand,'*? Why is God going to take the reign over his people **out** of the hands of Solomon's son? Aren't the riches and wisdom and all the achievements **proof** that Solomon's been truly God-**glorifying** and **blessed** by God?

Well, actually, **no**. Verse 6 of this chapter says, *'Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.'* So what had he done to anger God **so** much that he was going to divide the kingdom **because** of it? Well, **briefly**, verses 1-4 tell us that he'd taken many wives from the peoples that God had said they **weren't** to marry because they would turn men's hearts away from God. And that's what **happened** with Solomon, and of course his **people**. He broke the first commandment, to have no other gods before Israel's God.

So for all his **riches** and **splendour** and **fame**, Solomon was not right with God and so **judgement** was coming. And you know riches and prosperity and celebrity status are not evidence of a life blessed by God. How far the mighty fall. Look at Jimmy Savile. Look what's happened to Paul Gascoigne. What will now become of Oscar Pistorius? Just because someone seems to be blessed and prosperous, that doesn't mean they're right with **God**. And if they're not right with **God**, their high point in **this** life is as good as it's ever going to get, it's all downhill from then, with judgement to come.

Whereas those who **are** right with God have unlimited **treasures** to come, with God for eternity in heaven – **this** life is the **worst** they'll experience. Things will only get **better**! Where's **your** heart? That's the important thing for you this evening. Where's **your** heart? Things may be going really **well** for you – but where's your **heart**? Things may **not** be going so well for you, and you're getting **distracted** – but where's your **heart**? We need to have a heart for the things of **God**. We need to be **right** with him through Jesus Christ, who **loved** us and gave himself **for** us. Where's **your** heart?

**Solomon's** heart, mind, energy were with **riches**, his 100 **wives** and other **gods**. Enter Jeroboam.

We're told in verse 26 that he was an Ephraimite, his parents were Nebat and Zeruah and he came from Zeredah. This was a king in **history**, verifiable and **true**, not made up. The accounts in the Bible **are** verifiable and true.

He was one of Solomon's officials, verse 27, and the king liked the **look** of him and the way he went about his work. He was a man of **standing**, very **able**, hard-working, with great energy and ability. Solomon obviously recognised leadership qualities in him and so **promoted** him and put him in charge. A great start for Jeroboam – **promising**.

But there's no mention here of his standing before **God**, and it's certainly not because of any God-fearing qualities that he's promoted. Mistake? Perhaps, because the one Solomon promotes turns into his **enemy**. But we see that God **overrules** the situation, so that **his** purposes come about. God's in **control** – he's **God** – that's what he **does**.

Jeroboam must have **some** inclination towards the will of God because he listens to and is influenced by this prophecy from Ahijah starting at verse 29. They meet on the road out of Jerusalem, they're alone when the prophet gives him this message from God. A word from **God**. And it's good **news** from God. God gives Jeroboam a **promise**. Notice there are lots of '**I will**'. These signify **God's promise – he says 'I will'**.

As Ahijah takes his new cloak off and tears it into 12 pieces – I bet his wife was **well** pleased! – he gives Jeroboam **10**, and this is a picture of what God's going to **do**: verse 31 '*See I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes.*': verse 33 '*I will do this ...*': verse 35, '*I will take*': verse 36, '*I will give ...*': verse 37, '*I will take you and you will rule ...*': verse 38 – **big** verse – '*I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty ... and give Israel to you.*' So **many** '**I will**'. God **will** do this. So many promises. Jeroboam must've thought **all** his Christmases had come at once! **Brilliant!** Wait 'til he tells his friends down the local tavern! One minute a bricklayer, the next **king** of Israel! **Unbelievable!** God said '**I will**'.

God's promises. God makes promises to his people. Read the Bible – both New and Old Testaments, and you'll find God's promises to his people right from **Genesis** through to Revelation. God promises to take care of his people in **every** way, because he has **purposes** for his people.

In Jeremiah 29:11, it says God has *'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'* That's what we were thinking about this morning, weren't we? God promises **great things** to his people, his children. Like you parents make promises to your children. The big difference is, of course, is that he's **God** and he'll **fulfil** all his promises. He'll **never** fail to keep his promises. He's **God** – he's the only one who you can **utterly depend** on to keep his promises. *'Taste and see that the Lord is good.'* Do you **know** of his promises to **love** you, to **keep** you, to **protect** you, to **care** for you, to **provide** for you? Well **rejoice!** Because if you **are** his, if you're trusting in the work of **Jesus** who died, rose and ascended for salvation, his promises to prosper **you will** be fulfilled.

If you're **not** trusting him yet, why not get to know **more**? Ask people **here** about life with Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The great thing **is** that Jesus says, *'Seek and you will find.'* Jesus isn't **hiding** from you – he's wanting to be **found**. Perhaps he's speaking to you **now**? Why not get to know him?

**Another** amazing thing about God's promises is that we don't even **deserve** them.

God tells Jeroboam through Ahijah in verse 33 it's not because of anything that he's done or achieved, or the kind of person he is, instead we read, *'I will do this because they have forsaken me.'* God will do these things not because Jeroboam has done anything **right**, but because Solomon and his people have done **wrong**. Jeroboam doesn't **deserve** these promises, he's not **earned** God's favour. God has a purpose here, but Jeroboam hasn't **deserved** the good things that God has promised.

And we have to remember this. We don't **deserve** God's goodness, we don't **deserve** his blessing. No matter **how** good we feel we are. There **were** good things about Jeroboam – he was a hard worker and a good **leader** – but these didn't earn him God's favour. God promised him kingship over God's people – but he didn't **deserve** it. It's the same for **us** – *'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,'* Paul writes to the Romans – we don't **deserve** to be saved to eternal life, but God **promises** it to all who believe that Jesus came to die for our sins, and put our trust in **him**.

'But wait a minute', I hear you cry, 'what happened to the promise that God made to **David** in 2 Samuel 7:16? We read there, *'Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall be established*

*forever.*’ How can this promise to David and Solomon be fulfilled, if God is now making the promise **here** to Jeroboam?

Well, notice the **qualifications** to God’s promise here:

The 12 tribes of Israel are going to be **divided** between Jeroboam and Solomon’s son Rehoboam; so there’s going to be a **limitation** on Jeroboam’s kingship – David and Solomon’s line **will** be preserved – God’s promise to them **will** be fulfilled. Verse 34, *‘I will not take the **whole** kingdom out of Solomon’s hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant ...’* And notice **too** that the tribes that Solomon’s descendant will retain includes **Jerusalem**, verse 36, where God chose to put his Name, where God’s **temple** was, signifying God’s **presence** with his people – this part stayed with David’s family, climaxing in the birth of a Saviour, Jesus.

But notice there is also a limitation on **timing** – Solomon will rule all the days of his **life**, so Jeroboam won’t be king **yet**.

I came here over 30 years ago, and at **that** time we used to have coffee in the hall **downstairs** after the evening service. **One** evening I was attracted to a young lady, so I picked up courage and went over to the table where she was sitting with her mum. I asked her ‘Is it OK if I **sit** here?’ She said ‘Yes, of **course** – we’re just **leaving!**’ So I sat there on my own! God said to me – I **will** give you someone to love – but not yet. Sometimes he says, ‘I **will** ... but not **yet.**’ God’s timing I perfect.

Jeroboam won’t be king **yet**. And he won’t be king **forever**, see verse 39. Jeroboam’s rule is not forever. God will fulfil his promises to David, Solomon **and** Jeroboam.

**So**, ... because of **the situation** Solomon has got himself and his people **into** running after other gods, God gives Jeroboam **a promise** to make him king and build a dynasty.

But thirdly, there’s an ‘if’, **there’s a condition**. God promises to make Jeroboam **king**, but as well as the **limitations** there’s an ‘if’, and we find it in verse 38: *‘If you do whatever I command you and walk in **my** ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be **with** you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.’*

I can just imagine Jeroboam as Ahijah gave him this prophecy: “God’s going to make you king of ten of the tribes of Israel.” “**Great!**” says Jeroboam. “God’s going to build your family like he built king **David’s** family.” “**Brilliant!**” says Jeroboam.

“**If** you keep God’s commands and walk in his ways like David did.” “Yeah, yeah, yeah, **whatever**. OK. I’m going to be **king!** My family’s going to be as great as **David’s!** I’ll agree to **all** of it, yeah. Wait ‘til I tell Mrs. Jeroboam!”

Jeroboam hears God’s promise **clearly**, and I guess he’s more than a little **excited**, and he’s walking 10 foot **tall** after that. But he hasn’t paid much attention to the ‘**if**’, the condition that he’s to obey God’s **commands**, and **serve** him and him **only**. Jeroboam’s dynasty will be stable, as **long** as he remains faithful to the God who **made** him king.

So **we’ve** got to be careful too. Don’t just get so excited about the promises, that you ignore the **conditions** God gives for those promises. Let me give you a silly example: God **promises**, for example in Psalm 46:1 to be ‘*an ever present help in trouble*’, a **great** promise. But if we’ve gone out, robbed a bank, driven away at high speed while **drunk** and ended up **arrested**, I suggest that promise **won’t** be fulfilled, because we haven’t obeyed the rules of the **land**, never **mind** God’s rules.

If we belong to God, if we’re his, if we’re Christians, we’ll **want** to obey God’s commands, and walk in his ways. If we **don’t** want those things, it may well be that we **aren’t** Christians, and God’s promises won’t **apply**. Having said that, we know **none** of us is perfect, we still make mistakes, we still get it wrong, but by the grace and mercy of God his Spirit will **help** us.

We’ll **want** to walk in God’s ways and do what is right in God’s eyes. So we have to search our hearts, don’t we? Is this what we **want**? Because Jeroboam’s story tells us that for God’s promises to be fulfilled, we have to be going **God’s** way. Why would we want to go our **own** way, when we can go **God’s** way and experience his great promises being fulfilled in our lives? Why **forfeit** the life Jesus came to give, **eternal** life, life in all its **fullness**?

Jesus said in John 15:23, ‘*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will **come** to him and make our **home** with him.*’ What a **promise!** God living within you. But it’s **only** a promise for those who **love** him and obey Jesus’ **teaching**.

Let's **do** it. Let's **not** miss out on the promises by not fulfilling the conditions. Let's do whatever God commands and walk in God's ways and do what's right in God's eyes and we'll experience God's promises to his people **wonderfully** fulfilled.

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Sometimes we'll get it wrong, we'll make mistakes, but we have a **gracious** and merciful God, he knows us inside **out**, he **knows** our weaknesses. Fourthly, God works **despite** our mistakes and weaknesses to fulfil his purposes and promises.

Let's look again at Jeroboam. He's received this wonderful prophecy that he's going to be **king**, and now the world's his **oyster**. He's heard the prophecy, but he's not heard the limitation God's put on the timing of it. He had selective **hearing** when Ahijah said God had made Solomon ruler all the days of his life, verse 34.

In verse 40 Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam. Now if Jeroboam was just biding his time, keeping quiet, carrying on laying his bricks until Solomon died, I'm sure that Solomon wouldn't have felt the need to **kill** him. Solomon **wasn't** that kind of a guy! No, Jeroboam must have done something to **annoy** him.

The 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian, Josephus gives us clues: he wrote, [Antiq.8.7.8.209]. So Jeroboam stirred it up a bit. He was impetuous. He was going to be king, so why wait?

We must **always** wait for the Lord to fulfil his promises in the **way** and at the **time** he chooses. We mustn't **ever** think we can just give him a helping hand, try to move him on a bit quicker. Ever done **that**? **Wait** for God to fulfil his promises, because he knows the big picture, he sees the end from the beginning, he has plans to prosper his people, but in **his** way and at **his** time. God knows **everything**, and God knows **best**. **Trust** him. **Rest** in him. David urges us in Psalm 37:7, '*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.*' Something we **all** need to learn, don't we?

Jeroboam rushes forward, he makes a mistake. But notice God doesn't say, "**Now** you've done it! You've **blown** it my friend!" No. God's made a promise according to his will and purpose to make Jeroboam **king**, and God will **fulfil** his promise. Jeroboam will become king. God **preserves** him, so that his promise will be kept.

And we see that sometimes God fulfils his promises **despite** our weaknesses, **despite** our mistakes. Sometimes we want to go our own way, sometimes we still want to be in **control**. God will work **despite** us. Nothing can thwart the purposes of God, otherwise there would be a higher authority than **him**, and there **isn't**. We have a gracious and merciful God – he's a **powerful**, all-**knowing** God who **will** have his way.

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So we've seen God act in judgement when his people reject him; we've seen him give promises to them if they walk in his ways and obey his commands. And we've seen God will keep his promises to them, sometimes despite their weaknesses and mistakes.

But I just want to leave you with **this** thought. God promised Jeroboam he would be king, and he would be kept if he remained faithful to God. But God has promised a king of kings. Turn with me to Revelation 22, talking about the new heaven and the new earth when **Jesus** – king **forever**, not just temporary like Jeroboam - comes again.

Verse 3: *'No longer will there be any curse [meaning there will no longer be any judgement for his people because Jesus died to take the punishment for our sins]. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And – [listen to this] – they will **reign** for ever and ever.'*

Right through the Old Testament, God promised a **king**, a king whose reign would **never** end. That king has **come**, and he will come **again**, and God's said his people will reign **with** him for ever and ever. A **promise** from God. Think about **that** over the coming days and **every** day from now until God **fulfils** this promise. Praise him!