

He Caused Israel To Sin

December 23, 2007

There were a number of causes that led up to the division of God's people in the days of Rehoboam, as recorded in 1 Kings 12, but the proverbial straw that broke the camels back was Rehoboam's total and blatant rejection of the elders who advised him to lighten the heavy taxation imposed upon Israel under the reign of Solomon; they also advised him that if he would serve the people they would in turn serve him. This advice was rejected by Rehoboam's willingness to instead implement the council of his contemporaries who told him to increase the burden and impose stricter taxation on Israel. This decision resulted in what would change the entire course of the people of God - a revolt ensued, and the kingdom divided.

After this division took place Rehoboam reigned over the two southern tribes known as the Kingdom of Judah while Jeroboam became ruler over the 10 northern tribes known as the Kingdom of Israel. For fear that Israel would eventually return to Rehoboam and join themselves once again to the people over whom Rehoboam reigned, Jeroboam began changing the divine pattern of worship. While the Kingdom of Judah had very few good kings, the Kingdom of Israel had none. Israel eventually met her demise while Judah was eventually taken into Babylonian captivity.

An interesting point that is emphasized over and over again is the statement inspiration has made with regard to Jeroboam. No less than 20 times you'll read, "...he made Israel to sin." He was a wicked king with no compunction about his bold and blatant disregard for the ways of the Lord. Indeed he led Israel down a long path of immorality, irreverence, and spiritual decadence. By what methods did Jeroboam use to bring about Israel's apostasy? There are 4 areas in which Jeroboam altered the prescribed pattern and "caused Israel to sin": 1) He changed the place of worship. Jeroboam in effort to keep Israel from going back to the Holy city of Jerusalem, (the place where God ordained that his people were to worship Him), appointed Dan and Bethel as the place where worship was to be done; 2) He changed the object of worship. Jeroboam set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel to which Israel were now to give their allegiance and homage; 3) He changed the priesthood. No longer did Jeroboam think it necessary that the priesthood responsibilities should come only through the tribe of Levi as God ordained; instead, Jeroboam gave that rite to any tribe. Any man from any tribe could now perform the priestly rites; 4) He changed the time of the feast day. Though there was only one month difference in what God ordained and what Jeroboam set up, the fact is that Jeroboam changed it. No longer was the feast day to be in the

7th month as God designed, the 8th month seemed just as good in the eyes of this wicked King.

These changes by Jereboam 'caused Israel to sin'! And while there were a number of prophets (Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, etc) whom God sent to Israel (over a period of a little over 200 years) in an effort to bring about repentance, their message fell on deaf ears. Their eyes were blinded to the prescribed truth initially set forth by God and their ears would not listen to subsequent warnings by the prophets. Such disobedience under the leadership of 19 consecutive evil kings brought about their own demise when Jehovah brought the Assyrian nation under Tiglath-pileser ((2 Kings 15:29; 16:7-9) who took them captive. As the prophets warned, and since no repentance was sought, the kingdom of Israel was never again restored.

Jeroboam did not revere God or His word; instead he showed disrespect and blatant rebellion to the authority of Heaven. He changed the divine pattern of worship prescribed by God to a self-serving system, and relegated it to a religion of convenience. And because Israel indicated no desire to remain faithful to God or His Word they followed the course of one of the most wicked kings that ever lived in the days of Israel. No wonder divine repetition declared Jereboam as one who caused Israel to sin!

In reflection, one today might think of how terrible a leader Jereboam was and how bent he was on doing evil. One might further wonder how the people of God could continue to follow the course of this wicked man. But notice how similar people are today; it doesn't take much effort to get a big following in the religious world if one offers a self-serving religion of convenience. Sensational attractions, social programs, motivational speeches, devotionals, ceremonial pageantry, and personal testimonies attest to the fact that people are not satisfied in the religious world and are looking for change. Today when one changes the prescribed manner in which to worship God and do His work in order to be comforted by a 'more meaningful and spiritual' experience, he is not that far removed from walking in the steps of Jereboam. No matter how well intended, how seemingly insignificant, or how sincerely the offering is made, when one changes God's divine plan of doing things, he has usurped the authority of heaven and committed a heinous deed. When the plan of salvation is modified, the work and worship of the church altered, church government customized, or doctrinal truths compromised, one is walking in the steps of Jereboam. The Old and New Testaments are replete with examples of individuals who have either blatantly rebelled against God or have arbitrarily tried to improve upon God's prescribed plan; in both cases they walked in the paths of Jeroboam - the one who 'Caused Israel to Sin' -

both of whom were eventually destroyed! There's a lesson here for all of us.

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