

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

You rule over the affairs of men, and nothing is beyond the reach of your mighty hand. You foretold the destruction of Jeroboam's altar 300 years before Josiah's religious reforms. You said, "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Isa 46:9–10). Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised! Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about the division of the kingdom. Solomon was dead, and his son, Rehoboam, went to Shechem to be declared king over Israel. His right to rule over Judah was unquestioned, but his right to govern the northern tribes was far from certain. The harsh policies enacted during Solomon's final years had created resentment among the people, and they called for Jeroboam, a known enemy of the crown, to be their spokesman. From Rehoboam's point of view, this was not an encouraging sign. However, he showed himself to be his father's son by seeking the advice of his father's counselors (cf. Prov 11:14). Their wise advice was spot on, but his younger advisers, the friends he had grown up with, persuaded him that appeasement was a mistake. 'It's no accident that Jeroboam is their spokesman!' they said. 'Your best bet is to stand firm and show no weakness!' That made sense to Rehoboam, and he rejected the counsel of the older men. Disaster soon followed, and only a divine intervention prevented a bloody civil war. This story teaches me that men may plot and plan, but you are in control. When you say a thing will come to pass, it will. My response should be to listen to the word of the LORD (1 Kgs 12:24). Jeroboam lost no time in strengthening his position in the north. He built up Shechem and Penuel, but it didn't give him much peace of mind. He was convinced that the temple in Jerusalem would prove his undoing. Rather than trusting you to keep your promise to be with him and build him a sure house, he made two golden calves and set them up as the gods of Israel. The people quickly joined in his idolatry, and this terrible sin became a stumbling block for all the future kings of Israel. Jeroboam's sin grieved your heart, and you sent a prophet to rebuke him and curse his altar. Rather than repent, Jeroboam tried to seize your man, and only your mercy allowed his hand to be restored. If Jeroboam had any lingering doubts about how serious you were, they were laid to rest when your judgment fell on the very prophet you used to rebuke him. When you speak, you expect to be obeyed. Good intentions cannot excuse disobedience. Yet Jeroboam remained hardened (1 Kgs 13:33), and it ended up costing him the life of his son and the destruction of his dynasty. How sad that he was more afraid of losing his kingdom than he was of losing you!

Reflection

When Jeroboam created his false religion, he refused to allow the Levites to continue serving as priests. Those faithful to you were forced to leave their homes and move to Judah. Would I be willing to leave my home and friends in order to be faithful in your service?

Request

Father, Jeroboam is a tragic example of a man who refused to trust you to be faithful to your word. Help me to remain steadfast in my commitment to obey you, no matter how bleak the future or how desperate the situation. Remind me that "the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one" (2 Thess 3:3).

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the many lessons you teach me through the lives of Israel's kings. I'm grateful for the warnings that you post along my path! "Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession!" (2 Cor 2:14).

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: "Faithful remain to thy Savior and King" – Charles W. Ray.

Meditation Verse: 2 Chronicles 11:17.