

Solomon was a great king and he did great things. He expanded the borders of Israel. He built extravagant and amazing structures. He shared heavenly wisdom with the people. He constructed the dwelling place of God among His people. The long term opportunity for Israel to be in fellowship with God was well established. But then, mistakes were made. Not by God of course, but by Solomon, and then Rehoboam.

I Kings 11:4-8 – Almost inconceivable, but he sought to still believe in God and have a relationship with God, while also to appease his wives with idol worship. This displeased God greatly.

I Kings 11:31-35 – So God selected Jeroboam to lead 10 tribes away from Solomon's kingship.

I Kings 11:38 – The condition being, of course, that Jeroboam follow the will of God.

I Kings 11:40 – Solomon heard of this and sought to kill Jeroboam, so he fled.

I Kings 12:1-5 – Once Rehoboam was king, Jeroboam came back and sought to make peace. We know the story: the young king listened to his young friends and rejected Jeroboam's plea.

I Kings 12:25 – So, Jeroboam left and established a new capital city in the North. The Northern kingdom of Israel was born on this day.

At this point, I don't know how to feel about Jeroboam. It doesn't seem like he has done anything sinful against God. It looks like Solomon and Rehoboam made the colossal mistakes. But then...

I Kings 12:26-27 – But then it occurred to him that the people would return to Jerusalem. They would clearly go back for the religious festivals. They would need to go back to keep the Law. They would need to go back to make sacrifices. They would all be there for the day of Atonement.

And... they might fall in line with the South again and Jeroboam would be surely killed.

So, out of SELF-PRESERVATION, he needed a plan. He did not consult God. This was not about God. It was about HIMSELF. He needed to keep them from returning to the rightful place of worship.

I Kings 12:28-33 – He made the greatest appeal in all religious error: Thing about Yourself! He is effectively asking them to do what he is already doing. So he says: *"It is too much FOR YOU to go up to Jerusalem."* The idea here is: *"I know that's what we've always done and that it is God's will, but it is inconvenient and difficult and we can set up things here, closer, that will please God just as much."*

And what were his ideas:

- 1) We will set up 2 cities, one North and one South, to which you can go when you desire to make offerings.
- 2) In addition, we will set up "high places" all over so you can have a place close to home to worship.
- 3) Instead of it just being the Levites, we will open things for priests to be enlisted from other tribes.
- 4) While we still believe in the LORD, we will make our offerings to two golden calves. (Hard to comprehend). But just like Solomon, they still acknowledged God, these were just culturally accepted ways of worship they thought would not interrupt their fellowship with God.
- 5) We will even have a huge feast, just like in Jerusalem, except a month later and a different altar and priests and deliverer and such.

And... the people bought it! They were willing to be lead by this sinful man, who kept the people close to him by keeping them away from Jerusalem, where the Law and True Worship lived.

I Kings 14:7-12 – And the Lord was furious with Jeroboam and took him and his household out.

I Kings 14:15-16 – And for believing him and following him, all of Israel would suffer as well.

There is much we could discuss from this story. The sins of Solomon created the issue. The sins of Rehoboam kick started the division. The great sins of the evil Jeroboam were as devastating and selfish as any you can find in Scripture. But they are not our focus today. Our focus is on the people.

They made mistakes that affected themselves and their offspring for generations!

- 1) They believed a man. They listened to someone they respected, though they should not have.
- 2) They succumb to convenience. The idea of less travel and easier worship appealed to them.
- 3) They embraced new roles and leadership, like allowing for new priests. This found favor with many.
- 4) They wagered their souls that God would be okay w/ idol worship, so long as they still believed in Him.

And how could they know? How could they know if this was acceptable or not? Granted, there were things going on beyond their wisdom level – like God orchestrating the division. But how could they be sure that this form or religion and life would please God?

Only one way... by going back to Jerusalem! Going to the source, straight to God, to the Temple, to the Pattern, to the Law. If they had gone back to where they knew God approved, they would always be God approved. But they didn't. They took a chance instead of a trip, and they failed.

With this, our modern religious climate has MUCH in common. Any time a new denomination was started, or some culturally supported new age movement, there is always a story.

- 1) Maybe the men at the previous church were sinning, so we started something new.
- 2) Maybe new ideas prevailed that would draw more people.
- 3) Maybe, and so often, a combination of Humanism (idolatry) and God was demanded.

Regardless, the questions must be asked: *“How do I know if I am right here? How do I know if this church is right before God? How do I know if what we teach and are about is holy and accepted?”*

After every explanation has been given. After every reason exhausted. After every defense has been stated and heard, the answer will always be the same: “We Must Go Back To Jerusalem!” It is NEVER too much or too far or out of reach to go Back to Jerusalem, back to the beginning, back to God and faith and Truth, to find out if we are living and worshipping in a way that is pleasing to God! (Back to the Text to prove an argument is RARE anymore)

Church leaders will tell you it is too much (not necessary). Religious friends will tell you things are fine as they are (culturally accepted). Your own conscience may even approve the choices (pride). But you can never know if you are right until you return to where it all began, where it was right: Jerusalem.

For the Israelites, that meant the city of Jerusalem. The Law of Moses found there. The Temple of God where the LORD connected with Israel. And the activities in that city that God demanded from 500 years before.

For us it means going back to Acts 1-15. The place, Jerusalem, where the Church (the Temple Christ built) began. The teachings upon which that church have been built. It is not too much to go back to Jerusalem.

And what do we find there? Many wonderful, timeless, absolute truths. Here are a few the world's forgotten

- 1) **Inspiration must be Miraculously Proven!** (Acts 1)
 - a. **Power: Mark 16:16-20; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-8; 2:43; 3:6-8; 5:12; 6:6-8; 8:14-19**
 - b. **Message: Acts 2; Acts 3; 5:27-32; 7:1-60**
 - c. The Gospel, the Pattern, that saves souls started in Jerusalem. It extended outwardly by the Apostles and those who had miraculous power by their hands. Unique to all men, all churches, all organizations to come after, they stated the irrefutable Truth.
 - d. So not life, no conversion, no doctrine, no church, no idea is Christ-Centered Doctrinal Truth, unless we find it taught to us beginning in Jerusalem.
- 2) **Salvation is through Repentance and Baptism!** (Acts 2)
 - a. **Truth: Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:36-38; 8:35-38 (Philip from Jerusalem); Acts 22:16 (now outside of Jerusalem the Truth remains); I Peter 3:21**
 - b. To say that salvation is found in God's grace is correct! God's mercy is found in the beginning of the church. But to say that our actions don't access that grace, or that repentance and baptism are not essential to unite with Christ... well, you are believing men and modern ideas and maybe even what feels right, but you must go all the way back to Jerusalem!
- 3) **We can know the One Truth on Any Matter of Faith!** (Acts 15)
 - a. **The Problem: Acts 15:1 – The Solution: Acts 15:2-6**
 - b. **The Method: 15:7-19 – Collect all data and make that the Pattern!**
 - c. They first employed this approach, even in a case where God never shared a direct command. This harmony and study started with the Apostles in Jerusalem and must continue. The topic doesn't matter: music, funds, work of the church, grace and works – when we go back to Jerusalem we learn to harmonize Scripture and let God give the answers and to unite in them.

Who you are / How you live / How you worship / What united you with Jesus – where did you find the Truth on those topics? If inside yourself, you've not gone far enough. If in a group or a man or in this culture, you've not gone far enough. Today, go back to the beginning, the Inspired Truth of the Apostles, the unchanging Pattern of right that is not affected by time or distance. Go back to Jerusalem and find Jesus there.