

## 1 Kings 14:21-31

### Limits of the Text

1 Kings 21-31 is a complete literary unit summarizing the reign of Rehoboam.

### Plot

- Background – Rehoboam reigned in Judah (1 Ki 14:21).
- Crisis – Judah worshipped Canaanite gods (1 Ki 14:22-24).
- Resolution – God allowed Shishak to plunder Jerusalem (1 Ki 14:25-28).
- Conclusion – Rehoboam died (1 Ki 14:29-31).

### Towards Authorial Intent

The **plot** indicates that this is (yet another) story about punishment for disobedience.

### External Context

In the previous units God judged Solomon's sin (by dividing the kingdom) and Jeroboam's sin (by allowing his son to die and by promising to end his dynasty and deport Israel). This unit continues the same theme of disobedience and judgment in the divided kingdom.

## Interpretation

14:21 Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. 22 And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 24 and there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

God, as he always is, was the initiator; he chose Jerusalem as the city to put his name. Judah was his nation, and Rehoboam was his king. Rehoboam and Judah should have responded with gratefulness and love and been obedient. But the very next sentence informs the reader that Solomon foolishly had chosen a successor who had an Ammonite mother. "As an Ammonite she worshiped the detestable idol-god Molech (cf. 11:5, 33). Probably she was partially responsible for the revival of Canaanite paganism that took place during Rehoboam's reign."<sup>2</sup> With these two statements juxtaposed, it wouldn't have surprised the reader that something bad was about to happen.

What happened was that Judah did what was evil, which sparked God's jealousy (Ex 34:14); God's love is again described as being exclusive. "For him to be jealous of this exclusive relationship is no character flaw. Instead it magnifies God's righteousness, concern, and covenant loyalty. Anything less than this kind of justifiable protectiveness would indicate a careless attitude toward destructive behavior like idolatry and sensuality."<sup>3</sup>

Judah's evil was to adopt the Canaanite religions of the people they were supposed to have driven out. As mentioned in 1 Ki 3:1, high places were places of worship adopted from the Canaanites. Though some were used to worship God, the Israelites were not supposed to worship at these locations or in these ways. A pillar represented a god, and an Asherim (aka Asherah pole) represented a goddess. There are sexual overtones here, and so it is not surprising to find sex and prostitutes as part of Canaanite worship. High hills and green trees were favorite locations for these cultic shrines.<sup>4</sup>

25 In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon

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<sup>1</sup> ESV.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, 1:517.

<sup>3</sup> House, 194.

<sup>4</sup> Walvoord, 1:517; House, 194.

had made, 27 and King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. 28 And as often as the king went into the house of the Lord, the guard carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.

Shishak (aka Shoshenq I) was a Libyan who rose to power, became Pharaoh, and founded the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty in Egypt. To grow in power he harbored Jeroboam (1 Ki 11:40), Solomon's enemy, and then later attacked both Israel and Judah, where he won many battles and conquered many cities. A temple in Thebes contains inscriptions of his victories that corroborate the biblical account.<sup>5</sup>

As this paragraph so closely follows the previous one on idolatry, the invasion of Shishak is clearly meant to be read as God's judgment on Judah. God is again displayed as being sovereign; the nations around Israel and Judah serve his purposes. Rehoboam was able use the wealth his predecessors had accumulated in order to buy Shishak off, thus preventing the destruction of Jerusalem.

After Shishak left, Rehoboam replaced the gold shields with bronze shields. Why does the writer of Kings mention replacing gold with bronze? The emphasis of God's judgment upon Judah was decline. Everything that David and Solomon had accumulated and dedicated was gone. Gold was replaced with bronze. Judah was giving tribute instead of taking it. They had war instead of peace, invasion instead of security. Rehoboam ruled two tribes instead of twelve. Sin brought a decline in Judah's wealth and influence.

A statement about Rehoboam's temple worship immediately follows. Davis suggests that Rehoboam kept up the appearance of right worship,<sup>6</sup> though as far as we can tell, there was no genuine repentance or change in lifestyle after Shishak's departure.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. And Abijam his son reigned in his place.

The conclusion to the story is the standard formula, the summary of Rehoboam's reign. One interesting aspect is that the northern and southern kingdoms fought continuously.

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<sup>5</sup> Elwell, 1197.

<sup>6</sup> Davis, 170.

### **Three Levels of History**

1. Personal history – This is a story of a nation who was attacked for worshipping false gods.
2. National History – This is a story about the beginning of the southern kingdom's decline.
3. Redemptive History – This is a story about the impact that God's judgment has upon his covenant people.

### **Jesus and the Gospel**

This story reflects mankind's need for redemption through Jesus and the gospel.

1. What does this text teach us about ourselves? What need or deficiency in our lives does it expose? We tend to worship other things than God. We forget what God has done for us, so we go after lesser things.
2. What does this text teach us about God? How does it reveal God's grace to meet our need? In order to draw us back, God disciplines us. He does not allow us to remain in our sin.

### **Outline**

1. Judah worshipped Canaanite gods (1 Ki 14:21-24).
2. God sent Shishak to judge Judah (1 Ki 14:25-31).

### **Central Truth of the Story**

The author of Kings wrote 1 Kings 14:21-31 in order to teach exilic Jews that God's judgment began a decline in Judah.

### **Teaching Outline**

God's judgment upon his people changes their lives, and today I want you understand how God's judgment can impact your life. From our text in 1 Kings we are going to see four ways that God's judgment can change your life.

1. When we sin, God becomes jealous (1 Ki 14:21-24).
2. When we sin, God can remove his protection (1 Ki 14:25).
3. When we sin, God can take our wealth (1 Ki 14:26-28).
4. When we sin, God can take our security (1 Ki 29-31).

## Works Cited

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