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Division of the kingdom and its consequences

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Introduction and statement of the problem

In 1 Kings 12: 1 – 24 it is told the events that took place that ended up with the division of the kingdom of Israel into two different kingdoms: Israel (north) and Judah (south). This main part of history would bring a lot of consequences towards both kingdoms but specially the kingdom of Israel.

After Solomon's death his son, Rehoboam, went to Shechem where he would become king above all the kingdom of Israel. Once he was named king, the people came to him to "lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he [Solomon] put on us", not knowing how to answer to this petition, Rehoboam asked for advice to the elders who had served his father. The elders told Rehoboam that if he listens to the people and that if he gives them what they wanted, they would always serve the king. Not happy with the answer the elders gave him, he went to the young people of the kingdom he was grown up with and asked them the same question, the young people told him not to lighten the yoke, but instead, to make it harder. Rehoboam liked this idea and that's what he told the people of Israel, he will make it even heavier. He also added: "My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."

This decision would bring unhappiness among the people of the kingdom. On the north part of the kingdom, the people rebelled against the king and proclaim a new king for them, this character was Jeroboam the new king of Israel.

Since all the temples and priests had stayed in Judah with Rehoboam, Israel didn't have a place to serve God, so Jeroboam made a radical decision that would mark the future of the kingdom of Israel, he made his own images and temples for them and Israel fell in idolatry and rebelled now against God.

Justification(s) and Delimitation(s)

This paper will explain what exactly happened before and after the separation of the kingdom since it is a very important event on the Bible's timeline. This paper is necessary for the people to have a context as well as a better understanding on this subject, also it would explain why in the books after, the Bible relates histories of two kings from two kingdoms.

The delimitations I can think of when it comes to writing about this subject would be pretty much none. Nowadays we count with a variety of articles and books that can be helpful to find information about this subject, not forgetting the Bible as the main source of information and also Ellen G. White's commentaries on her books.

Since this was a historical event, there are plenty of non-Adventist articles that are related to this event and give a point of view from a professional and historical perspective

Review of the literature

In order to get the understanding of the events I've consulted a small number of articles published by other authors in order to get more knowledge on the matter and to see what they have to say about it. I've based some ideas on this article based on the retrieved information. The respective bibliographies are found in the Bibliography page.

– The Causes of the Division of Israel's Kingdom - Wayne A. Brinale

In this article I was introduced to a new cause that influenced the separation of the kingdom, that was the inter-tribal jealousy over the pre-eminence of Judah and its favorite son, David. The reason why was because the tribes had always been jealous of their independency and rights. This wasn't the first time this jealousy thing brought problems to the kingdom, in 2 Samuel we found a character named Sheba that started a revolt against David, this article says that this revolt came because the tribe of Judah wanted to emphasize the fact that David was of Judah. The 10 northern tribes accused Judah of treating them contemptuously, and Judah responded rather harshly.

Another possible cause that came along with this inter-tribal jealousy was Solomon's military emphasis on the south rather than the north. While Solomon was king of Israel, Egypt was a growing and powerful threat to his kingdom, for that reason he put military emphasis on defending the south leaving the north as an easy target with a little army to defend from the threats such as the Arameans.

And last but not least another problem that influenced the separation of the kingdom was Solomon's exploitation of the people. Solomon's kingdom was huge and bright, but in order to keep it that way, a lot of resources were needed, that's why he started to implement some requirements to the people in order to generate an income to the kingdom, among these requirements we found high taxes and hard labor.

- From Two Kingdoms To One Nation - Israel and Judah: Studies in Division and Unification - Shamaï Gelande

This article gives more emphasis on how the kingdom came back together but and the process of unification, but also gives the author point of view in the process of separation and what took place in order to get one kingdom into two separate kingdoms

- The Division of the Kingdom: Its Causes and Consequences Chilkuri Vasantharao

This article gives a context of the kingdom prior its separation and gives a comparative between David's kingdom and Solomon's kingdom, how they administrated the kingdom and what they implemented to keep it growing

Presuppositions

By the title of this paper we can assume that the kingdom was one once and therefore there was one king that reign above all. We also know that there is a consequence, either good or bad, for every decision we make. This event would mark the beginning of an important era in the Bible's storyline.

Methodology

All the information provided was taken from the Bible and a number of articles previously published. Since this paper is about an historical event, historical entrees on books and internet where consulted as well. I've also consulted the Seventh-Day Adventist Commentary as well as what Ellen G. White has to say about this event on her books.

As you can see, all the information has been provided from trustable sources that people make use of all the time. All the information has also been read and analyzed in order to provide an understandable view of what this paper is about.

Since this paper is only analyzing something that has already happened, the reading and summary were the only methods I found useful in order to put this paper together. No surveys or anything else were required on the making of this paper.

Division of the Kingdom and Its Consequences

So far there have been 3 kings on Israel: Saul, David and Solomon. Each of these kings made an important contribution towards the creation of the kingdom of Israel: Saul brought the tribes together unifying them into one big nation, also Saul became the first king of that nation; David expanded the kingdom's territory by military action and conquering other nearby kingdoms; Lastly, Solomon built a lot of important buildings for his people among the kingdom, one of those buildings was the Temple. This last king Solomon, in order to finance such big projects, he decided to implement a tax collection system to the people.

Giving a little bit of context prior these events, there was a man by the name of Jeroboam, he was a servant of King Solomon, one day a prophet came to Jeroboam and told him that God has revealed that He would take ten tribes from the kingdom of Solomon's son and that he, Jeroboam, would be crowned as the new king of those ten tribes. When Solomon heard about this prophecy, he got a lot of anger against his servant Jeroboam and wanted to kill him. When Jeroboam heard what the king was planning on doing, he got scared and decided to flee to Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

After Solomon died and the problems with Rehoboam started, Jeroboam came back to Israel where the tribes who were in rebellion took no time to make him king above all the kingdom of Israel, just two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) remained loyal to the son of Solomon as their king.

Here is the first problem Jeroboam is facing as the king of Israel: you'll see that he's got the people and the land, but he didn't have any temples nor priests for his people since the temple was on Jerusalem on the other kingdom and the priests also stayed on Judah. Jeroboam was afraid that if the people of his kingdom went to Jerusalem, they would change their mind and reconcile

with Rehoboam, so in order to keep the people from going to Jerusalem, he lifted shrines and brought images to the people so that they could have a god to worship.

“Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.” After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.” One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan.” (1 Kings 12: 26 - 29)

With this, Jeroboam is establishing his own religion by making his own images, getting his own priests, creating his own traditions and lifting his own shrines and temples for these images he's created. This of course marked the future of Jeroboam as a king and also marked the future kings that were to come to rule over the kingdom of the north. God didn't like that Jeroboam started to worship images and that, because of those images, they were to forget about Him. This would be something that also marked the future of the kingdom of Israel and its people. God sent the prophet Ahijah to give a message to Jeroboam.

“The Lord will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam. Even now this is beginning to happen. [...] And he will give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit.” (1 Kings 14: 14, 16)

This message would set the future of the kingdom of Israel and the future of its king and its family. Because of this decision Jeroboam took, God cut his family from being the royal family,

if we take a look at all the kings that reigned over Israel, we'll be able to see that pretty much most of these kings weren't related to each other, what would happened was that someone would come to Israel to make war and conquer Israel, kill the current king and declare himself or someone else as king of Israel. To be exact, there were a total of 9 different dynasties in Israel fighting one another to see who gets to rule over Israel.

So far we've been talking about Jeroboam and the kingdom of Israel (the kingdom of the north). Now let's talk about king Rehoboam and the kingdom of Judah which is not far away from being as bad as the kingdom of Israel. It's important that we take a look at Judah as well since the prophecy said that Jesus would be born from the descendance of the family of king David. A very important difference between the kings of Judah and Israel was that while in Israel there were 9 different royal families, in Judah there was only one that remained still.

We could tell that pretty much all the kings of Israel were 'bad' since they brought idolatry to the people and started worshiping images as gods, Judah wasn't the exception either, but in difference with Israel, there were some 'good' kings in Judah who remained faithful to God and trusted Him. For example, King Hezekiah is recognized for his success on removing idolatry out of the temples of Judah, but the two kings after him, Manasseh and Amon, brought idolatry back causing the kingdom of Judah to suffer from the anger of God. Finally, King Josiah returned to the worship of the one true God, but it was too late since God allowed Babylon to conquer and destroy Jerusalem.

Conclusion

We've found at least three reasons why God allowed the kingdom to be split into two separate kingdoms: The first reason goes way back to king Salomon, who had allowed the people of Israel to worship images as gods, God didn't like this decision, therefore He sent a message to king Salomon telling him that He would take the kingdom away from him and that his son Rehoboam would become the next king of Israel.

The next main reason would be Rehoboam's character, his downfall started when he decided to listen to the young people of the kingdom instead of listening to the king's counselors when it came to lighten the work and taxes over the people of Israel.

And last main reason I think the kingdom of Israel got divided was inter-tribal jealousy, some reasons of this jealousy would've been that the south was blessed with many leaders such as Joshua from Ephraim, King Saul from Benjamin and King David from Judah.

This event in biblical history can be used as a lesson for our spiritual life; when the kingdom got divided, we see the kingdom of the north (Israel) falling for idolatry and forgetting about God, what did that bring them? God allowed the Assyrians to conquer them; while in the south (Judah), while there were some 'good' kings, idolatry made its way to the people and God also allowed them to be conquered, in this case by the Babylonians.

We should keep trusting in God and never leave from His side, because when we do, we are exposed to many dangers from the outside world that can bring bad consequences to us.

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