

1 Kings 14

Notes for Virtual Vestry: 1 November 2025

During the week I read about something counsellors call the 'Solomon Paradox'. How wise and knowledgeable people may lack understanding or wisdom in regards to their own lives. It might be worth thinking about this in our study of Kings.

I'm not a theologian but I do try to get at the essence of the text, even if I and see things a bit differently. Having said that...

The players

Abijah, Jeroboam's son, falls ill. I wonder if he was going to be the heir, seeing as we are given his name? He doesn't get to see his mother again after she leaves.

Jeroboam: my Google search found that in seeking the Prophet of Yahweh, Jeroboam was kind of admitting his own set up didn't cut it and doing this would undermine his power. Also, sending his wife may have been a vain attempt at avoiding Divine scrutiny.

The prophet Ahijah, who is now old and blind, gave the original prophecy that Jeroboam would be king over Israel. God tips off Ahijah about the subterfuge of Jeroboam's wife and, under instruction from God, now declares a harsh edict against the house of Jeroboam.

The Wife of Jeroboam is never given a name. It is her son, Abijah, who is sick. As instructed, she comes with gifts and in disguise, which is a bit strange seeing as Ahijah is basically blind. But it is others Jeroboam doesn't want to know he is seeking the prophet of God. She never speaks and never makes it home before her son dies.

Choose a character and walk in their shoes for a bit. What did you learn?

The prophecy

God informs Ahijah (who is old and nearly blind by now) that Jeroboam's wife is coming in disguise regarding her son. And Ahijah issues an irrevocable edict against the dynasty (vs 7-11), stating that Jeroboam has not been like David after God tore Israel away from David's house and gave it to Jeroboam.

The prophecy doesn't hold back – everyone is going to die and not be buried but rather be eaten by dogs and birds – a dishonourable death. Except for Abijah – who God is going to allow to be buried properly because he's the only good one in the family.

God states that Jeroboam has done evil above all who were before him (v 9). The text implies that idolatry is far more evil than genocide, rape and forced labour (to name but a few things).

Discuss

The reason

Commentaries emphasise Abijah's death as a judgement against Jeroboam and his divisive religious system. The prophecy points to the Asherah poles and other gods that Jeroboam has set up. In one translation the prophecy states that Jeroboam has thrust God behind his back.

Verse 15-16 includes a prophecy regarding Babylonian captivity (Israel will be uprooted and sent to a place beyond the Euphrates).

Discuss

The outcome

Ahijah tells Jeroboam's wife that her son will die the moment she gets home. That he will be mourned and buried but he will be the only one because he's the only one in whom God found something good.

Again, the death of a child is portrayed as a judgement against the King that sins (see also David's first son to Bathsheba). The way this is portrayed, God has no problem killing children as a disciplinary measure against the parents.

Is the problem that God is harsh with those who disobey or is the problem with us and the way we (including the author) view God?

Rehoboam

Down in Judah, things aren't much different than they are in Israel. Idolatry and other practices abound.

They do give Rehoboam's mother a name though, Naamah, and his son, who succeeds him, is also called Abijah.

The meaning of Naamah. I decided to look this up given the text seems to make a point of it by mentioning it twice. The meaning of the name in Hebrew is 'pleasant'. In Jewish mysticism, Naamah is the name of a demon who seduces men. The human Naamah earned her name because she was able to seduce men with the play of her cymbals. It bugs me that this is yet another example of how female sexuality is presented as evil compared to male sexuality.

How should we think about sexuality in the bible?

In this chapter, Shishak, King of Egypt, loots Jerusalem, taking pretty much everything back to Egypt. I find this an interesting turnaround, given that the Israelites "looted" Egypt when they left with Moses, when many Egyptians gave them their valuables. There is a certain level of irony in this.

Discuss

Rehoboam tries to restore some of Solomon's glory by making bronze shields – but they only ever get them out when Rehoboam came by (and probably needed an ego boost). This seems ridiculous to me, but then, Rehoboam has just lost his father's massive fortune.

Some bigger issues

I'm not sure I want to comment too much on the remaining text here. However, I would like to discuss the issue of *idolatry*. We touched on it earlier, but I would like to expand. Both kingdoms fall into idolatry pretty quick after David.

I would like to ask, what is the problem with idolatry? The books of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles seem to contain a whole range of evil and awful stuff that people did, but it is made clear that the big issue God is displeased with is idolatry.

Why is idolatry such a problem? The first and third of the ten commandments deal with it specifically and Israel goes into captivity because of it. We tend to just agree that idolatry is bad, do it and God will get mad – so what is the big issue?

Discuss.

I see the Books of Samuel and Kings as a mirror on human nature. I see a lot of lack of personal insight. Thinking of the 'Solomon Paradox', how do we gain personal insight or is it beyond us? Given that Solomon eventually saw all his excess as vanity I would say there was some personal insight there. David also seemed to have a personal insight.

Discuss