

Restoring Part 1

- The US has been a country for nearly 232 years
 - But only 85 years into our existence, we almost split into a northern nation and a Southern nation
 - The United States
 - And the Confederate States
 - Or Texas and a few other places
- Israel was a united kingdom for only a brief period of time – 112 years
 - At the end of that 112 years, Solomon died, and upon his death God had declared that the kingdom of Israel would become divided because of Solomon's idolatry
 - The ten tribes in the north would split off under the leadership of Jeroboam, a leader from the most power tribe in the north, Ephraim
 - In fact, God Himself appointed Jeroboam to be the king of the north in 1Kings 11
 - A prophet came to Jeroboam and declared that God had given him the authority to rule over the 10 northern tribes after Solomon's death
 - Meanwhile, in the South the remaining two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, would remain ruled by Solomon's heir, his son Rehoboam
 - So because Solomon sinned and followed after the idols of his pagan wives, the nation is split
- During the centuries that followed, both the North and the South generally went from bad to worse
 - For example, the Northern Kingdom of Israel last for 209 years after the split

- During that time they set up their capital in Samaria, establish a false temple, a false priesthood, and a distorted version of the Law
- And they were ruled by a succession of 18 kings, all of whom were considered to be bad kings - disobedient to the covenant and following after a long list of abominations
 - In fact, each king tends to be worse than the previous, inciting God's anger
- Eventually in 722 BC God scatters the 10 tribes altogether by bringing the Assyrians against Israel
 - The nation is taken captive, and the tribes are lost to history, even to today
- The Southern Kingdom of Judah also begins a long history of ups and downs - more down than up
 - They have 11 bad kings interspersed by 8 good kings
 - Many of the bad kings are as bad as any of the northern kings
 - And the precious few good kings can only stem the tide of disobedience for a time
 - Yet God deal differently with the Southern Kingdom
 - It takes 345 years before the nation is completely dispersed into captivity at the hands of the Babylonians under command of Nebuchadnezzar
 - Yet they are eventually restored to the land beginning 70 years later
- This raises an interesting question for us this morning
 - If both the North and the South suffered under disobedient kings with similar patterns of idolatry and corruption, why did God treat the North different from the South?
 - For example, the ten tribes in the north were scattered brutally under the conquering army of the Assyrians
 - And they have never been heard from since

- On the other hand, the Southern tribes were similarly brutalized by the Babylonians, but they remained largely intact
 - And after 70 years, God allowed them to return to their land and even rebuild the temple
 - Though they never return to their prior glory, they nevertheless rebuild Jerusalem and remain a distinct people until AD70
- So how do we explain the difference between how God responded to the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom?
 - The difference comes from the difference between judgment and discipline
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[1Kings 14:1](#) ¶ At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick.

[1Kings 14:2](#) Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise now, and disguise yourself so that they will not know that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh; behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who spoke concerning me *that I would be* king over this people.

[1Kings 14:3](#) "Take ten loaves with you, *some* cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy."

[1Kings 14:4](#) ¶ Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age.

[1Kings 14:5](#) Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. You shall say thus and thus to her, for it will be when she arrives that she will pretend to be another woman."

[1Kings 14:6](#) ¶ When Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in the doorway, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you *with* a harsh *message*.

[1Kings 14:7](#) "Go, say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel, [1Kings 14:8](#) and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight;

[1Kings 14:9](#) you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—

[1Kings 14:10](#) therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone.

[1Kings 14:11](#) "Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken *it*."

[1Kings 14:12](#) "Now you, arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die.

[Kings 14:13](#) "All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam's *family* will come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

[1Kings 14:14](#) "Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on.

[1Kings 14:15](#) ¶ "For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the *Euphrates* River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger.

[1Kings 14:16](#) "He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin."

- Jeroboam had been awarded the Northern Kingdom by God
 - God told him to remain faithful
 - But he didn't
 - He was worse than all kings who had come before
 - And he took the rest of the ten tribes with him
 - So Jeroboam's son Abijah becomes deathly sick, the king sends his wife to ask the prophet of the northern kingdom to tell them if his son will live
 - Interestingly, Jeroboam tells his wife not to say who she was because he feared the condemnation of the prophet
 - The king knew he was guilty of great sin against God
 - He was aware of his sins against God
 - But rather than own up to them, he merely tried to deceive the prophet and hide from his judgment
 - But God sees through the plan, of course
 - So God uses the opportunity to pronounce a judgment against Jeroboam for his sinful ways
 - The judgment was to be the death of Jeroboam's son

- Then it was the cutting off of Jeroboam's entire family from the throne
- Finally, the nation itself would be scattered
 - In fact, the entire house of Jeroboam will perish
 - No restoration, only judgment
- But now consider Jeroboam's contemporary in the South, Rehoboam, Solomon's son

[1Kings 14:22](#) Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed.

[1Kings 14:23](#) For they also built for themselves high places and *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree.

[1Kings 14:24](#) There were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

- Sound familiar?
 - The South didn't fare any better under Rehoboam's rule
 - In fact, the author of 1Kings specifically says that the South did all the same abominations as the northern kingdom of Israel
 - Verse 24
 - So what would you expect God to do to Rehoboam?

[2Chr. 12:1](#) ¶ When the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong, he and all Israel with him forsook the law of the LORD.

[2Chr. 12:2](#) And it came about in King Rehoboam's fifth year, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem

[2Chr. 12:3](#) with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people who came with him from Egypt were without number: the Lubim, the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians.

[2Chr. 12:4](#) He captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

[2Chr. 12:5](#) Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, 'You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.'"

[2Chr. 12:6](#) So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous."

[2Chr. 12:7](#) ¶ When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some *measure* of deliverance, and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak.

[2Chr. 12:8](#) "But they will become his slaves so that they may learn *the difference between* My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

- As Rehoboam and the other leaders of Israel are engaged leading their nation in sinful worship, God intervenes
 - He sends up a Pharaoh from Egypt to conquer Judah
 - And then by the word of a prophet in Judah, God tells the leaders that this trouble was a result of their sin against God
 - They have forsaken Him, so He forsake them
 - The word for forsake is azab, which means abandon
 - They abandoned God, so He was showing them what it felt like to be abandoned by God
- Already we see a difference in God's approach in the South
 - In the case of Jeroboam in the north, God said you will be forever cut off
 - No opportunity to repent, no options
 - 1Kings 14:11 said the Lord has spoken it, so it will be done
 - God moved immediately to a final and irrevocable judgment that ultimately led to the complete scattering and destruction of Israel in the north
 - His words are spoken around 927 BC
 - But it takes over 200 years before the sentence is carried out
 - But in the case of the South, God seems to leave a door open
 - First, He merely says I have forsaken you because you had forsaken me

- He doesn't promise any particular outcome, although destruction at the hands of the Egyptians is certainly implied
 - Secondly, he leaves an opportunity for Rehoboam to respond
 - And respond they do
- Then the leaders see their opportunity and respond
 - They repent and so God relents
 - Remember how King Jeroboam in the North chose to approach the prophet when his son was dying?
 - He knew of his own guilt yet he tried to hide it
 - Rather than repent as the men in the South did, he persisted in his sin
- In this fact, we find the essential difference between the North and the South
 - All sin brings condemnation, but repentance brings opportunity for forgiveness
 - While a hardened heart can bring only destruction
- As a result of the South's repentance upon recognizing God's offense at their sin, God relents
 - The king of Egypt isn't permitted to destroy the people and the city
 - Instead, they suffer under a period of slavery to the Egyptian king
 - Which may not seem better to you and I, but God explains the logic in verse 8
 - In verse 8 God says that they will be slaves for a time so they might understand the difference between serving God and serving this king
 - This is discipline, isn't it?
 - God is at work to change their attitudes and their hearts

- For example, have you ever had a young child threaten to run away?
 - They object to your rules and to your expectations
 - Perhaps they didn't get their own way?
 - Perhaps they've even gone so far as to pack a small bag and walk out the front door
- What do you do?
 - In my family, you wave goodbye from the front porch
 - My wife even goes so far as to offer to pack a lunch
 - And as they walk slowly down the sidewalk with their bag, trying to look as pitiful as possible, we just let them go
 - Finally, they sit down on the curb just out of sight, feeling sorry for themselves
 - Eventually, we walk up the street and ask them if they would like to come home now
 - When they say yes, we tell them it's too late, we've already rented out their room
- The point is, the child quickly comes to see that living without the security of a family and its rules is far worse than living under those rules
 - Stepping out from under God's expectations may seem appealing to us at first
 - But then when we taste the other side, we realize how good we had it in the house of the Lord
 - So, God says I want to teach them a lesson
 - A lesson of how good it is to serve the living God
- You see the Northern Kingdom suffered God's wrath and experienced His judgment
 - There was no mercy, no reprieve
 - It wasn't intended to teach a lesson

- It was intended to blot them out
- For judgment is the only possible response to the unbeliever
 - Those who do not know God nor love Him nor follow His commands will be destroyed

[Prov. 15:29](#) The LORD is far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

- On the other hand, the Southern Kingdom didn't experienced God's judgment, but rather His discipline
 - God had no intention of destroying the Southern Kingdom
 - Instead, God desire to show them a lesson
 - And the arrival of the Egyptian king was intended to bring about that learning
 - Remember, Judah was the tribe that would produce the Messiah
 - Judah held the remnant of Israel
 - The group within the history of Israel who truly believed and trusted in the Lord
 - And they remain faithful even in Israel's darkest hours
 - Here, they respond to God's discipline as only His children can respond
 - They repent

[2Cor. 7:8](#) For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it— *for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—
[2Cor. 7:9](#) I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

- If we are to understand the lessons from Israel's history, then we must understand that discipline is something that God brings to benefit us

[Heb. 12:7](#) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

[Heb. 12:8](#) But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[Heb. 12:9](#) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

[Heb. 12:10](#) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

[Heb. 12:11](#) All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- All discipline feels a little like judgment
 - It's easy to get them confused in our own life
 - The writer to the Hebrews even acknowledges that it doesn't feel joyful to receive God's discipline
 - But it trains us
 - And after the training is over, we have a peaceful fruit of righteousness
 - Discipline trains us to do the right things rather than the wrong things
 - And when we do the right things – when we are righteous – we will have a peaceful life
 - Peace in our days, since we will not find ourselves bearing the consequences of sin
 - Peace in our minds, since we will not have the guilt and conviction of knowing we are doing the wrong thing
 - Peace in our hearts, since we will know we have pleased the Lord, and gained His approval
 - A God Who loves us enough to discipline us
- Our study is a study of God's discipline, not His judgment
 - For as God's children in faith, we are subject to His discipline, but never His wrath

- So with that difference understood, we're ready to watch God's discipline re-emerge with full force against Judah
 - Because, unfortunately, the discipline of 1Kings 11 is not the end of the story, but only the beginning
 - God's discipline had only a momentary effect on Judah
 - As I mentioned already, the history of the Southern Kingdom was an up and down history
 - Altogether they had 8 good kings but 11 bad kings
 - Rehoboam was a bad king, a man who didn't follow God's commandments
 - He was followed by a good king, his son Abijah
 - And so it went, back and forth for 345 years
- Until 605 BC
 - By 605 BC, God had determined to bring the Southern Kingdom under even more severe discipline
 - The nation of Judah would be taken captive by Babylon
 - And the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed
 - And even worse, the temple of Solomon would be destroyed
 - Severe discipline indeed
 - Jeremiah was the first to inform the nation of this coming judgment

[Jer. 25:1](#) ¶ The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),

[Jer. 25:2](#) which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

[Jer. 25:3](#) "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.

[Jer. 25:4](#) "And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear,

[Jer. 25:5](#) saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever;

[Jer. 25:6](#) and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.'

[Jer. 25:7](#) "Yet you have not listened to Me," declares the LORD, "in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.

[Jer. 25:8](#) ¶ "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words,

[Jer. 25:9](#) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and *I will send* to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

[Jer. 25:10](#) 'Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

[Jer. 25:11](#) 'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

- This is the discipline of the Lord
 - You should note how that passage ended
 - The captivity would only last 70 years
 - It's not judgment, it's not destruction
 - It's a temporary step of discipline that eventually results in the nation returning to their land
 - But before He can bring them back and restore them, God must first bring them down to size
 - Remove their corrupt leaders
 - Banish their false teachers
 - And destroy their opportunity to worship with false and deceptive hearts – to profane true worship
 - To accomplish this, God goes out of His way to deal with each area independently
 - And he does it by bringing Neb into Jerusalem on three separate occasions

[2Chr. 36:5](#) ¶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

[2Chr. 36:6](#) Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him and bound him with bronze *chains* to take him to Babylon.

[2Chr. 36:7](#) Nebuchadnezzar also brought *some* of the articles of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his temple at Babylon.

[2Chr. 36:8](#) Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.

- As we conclude for this week, we see the beginning of God's elaborate plan to bring discipline to the nation of Judah
 - The seventeenth king on the throne in Judah is yet another evil king
 - And he has the dubious distinction of being the king to welcome the first of Neb three attacks on Jerusalem
 - He's dragged off to Babylon
 - We're told that Neb also began to raid the Temple
 - And he carries off some of the articles of the house
 - What 2Chr doesn't tell us is that Neb subjugation of the Jews also involved stripping them of their noblemen
 - Not only was the king taken, but so was Daniel and his friends

[Dan. 1:1](#) ¶ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

[Dan. 1:2](#) The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

[Dan. 1:3](#) ¶ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, [Dan. 1:4](#) youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- God is beginning a process of bringing down the nation of Judah

- And He's doing very methodically
 - Step one is leadership
 - The nations ills were directly related to the will and faithfulness of its leaders
 - Remember there have been multiple good and multiple bad kings
 - And as the kings went, so went the people
 - Therefore, if God is going to discipline the people and eventually restore them in a new form
 - He must begin with the corrupt leadership
 - So Neb is directed by God's hand to remove the king and all the noblemen who rule with him
 - Of course, in any operation like this, there is bound to be collateral damage, which is why Daniel is caught up
- So today, we see just the beginning of God's discipline
 - And we note that it starts with the those leading God's people
 - As God brings His discipline among and to His people, He will often bring it first to the leaders who are responsible for the poor state of affairs
 - And in our lives, when we are deserving of God's discipline, God may work in our lives to eliminate our opportunities to lead or direct God's people
 - We may be exiled, so to speak
 - We may see our desire to lead or initiate frustrated
 - We may find our idea falling on deaf ears, and our best efforts failing
 - Maybe we need to give attention to those situations by asking God where our own walk has departed from Him?
 - Because it's not too late
 - We don't necessarily have to see Step 2 & 3...like Judah did