

**Jeroboam: The Tragedy of Spiritual Pragmatism**

**Lesson 6**

*Whereupon the king… made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much [too hard] for you to go up to Jerusalem: 1 Kings 12:28*

**The Background of Jeroboam**

**Jeroboam’s family – a proud Ephraimite (1 Kings 11:26)**. Jeroboam came from the proud tribe of the Ephraimites, the descendants of Jospeh and an important tribe in Israel’s history.

**Jeroboam’s failure – a rebel against the King (1 Kings 11:26-28, 40).** Solomon had put Jeroboam over the forced labor in the north, and Jeroboam’s countrymen convinced him to rebel against Solomon.

**Jeroboam’s future – a prophecy of future success (1 Kings 11:30-39).** The prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam that he would be given the northern 10 tribes of Israel, and that if he would follow God then he would have an established dynasty.

**The Apostasy of Jeroboam**

**Jeroboam’s problem (1 Kings 12:26-27).** Jeroboam feared that if the people in his kingdom went to Jerusalem for the feasts to be held at the temple, that they would decide to go back to David’s line and kill him.

**Jeroboam’s solution (1 Kings 12:28-33).** Jeroboam decided that to fix this, he needed to create his own religion. So he proposed a twist on the normal worship of the Lord.

* **A new symbol (12:28) –** Probably borrowing from Aaron, Jeroboam sought to present the God who brought Israel out of Egypt as a calf.
* **New centers (12:29) –** Rather than gathering in Jerusalem, a long distance for some and a steep climb for all, Jeroboam conveniently sets up two calves, one in the northern end of the kingdom (Dan) and the other at the southern end of the kingdom (Bethel).
* **A new priesthood (12:31) –** Not surprisingly, the priests and Levites reacted against Jeroboam’s new religion, so Jeroboam allowed anyone who wanted to be a priest.
* **A new calendar (12:32-33) –** Finally, Jeroboam borrows feasts from the south but puts his own spin on them.

**The Doom of Jeroboam**

Two lengthy stories at the end of Jeroboam’s life show us how upset God was with his evil choices.

**God sends a prophet to pronounce judgment on Jeroboam (1 Kings 13).** The author of Kings tells us an important story of Jeroboam’s false religion being denounced. The strange ending is meant to emphasize that what God says will happen is going to happen.

**Jeroboam seeks out a prophet who pronounces judgment on Jeroboam (1 Kings 14).**