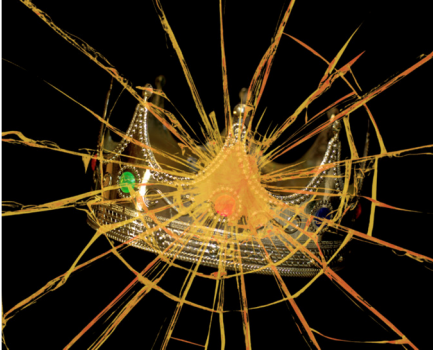


## Am I Throwing Away My Life's Greatest Privilege? (Part II)

**1 Kings 12:24: (KJV) *Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me...***



King Solomon ruled over a united kingdom of the 12 tribes of Israel. While the king celebrated the breathtaking splendor of Israel's civil engineering feats and the exquisite opulence of his palaces and buildings, the people were being suffocated under unreasonably high taxes and forced labor. Tribal jealousies also became prevalent between the northern and southern regions, especially between Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south. These conditions, along with Solomon's impending death, set the table for a never-before-seen fracturing of national unity. But there was hope. In Part I of this two-part series, we laid the groundwork for what would happen, how

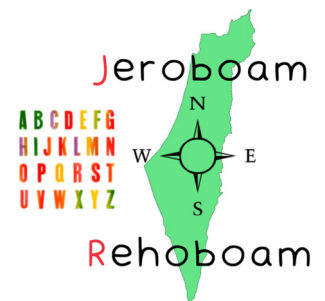
this hope could unfold. Simply stated, it all came down to being given extraordinary opportunity and privilege by God and the decisions that followed these gifts.

The two key people in this account are Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

Jeroboam was a servant of Solomon. 1 Kings 11:28 describes him as a *mighty man of valor*, and his father was from Ephraim in the north. Solomon put him in charge of the conscripted labor force.

Rehoboam was one of Solomon's sons, and at age 41 was given the throne of Israel when Solomon died. His mother was an Ammonite and interestingly, of all the children Solomon had by his thousand wives and concubines, Rehoboam is the only son of Solomon named in the Bible.

These confusing names are easy to remember because they are alphabetical - "J" for Jeroboam comes first in the alphabet - he is from the north - so picture him at the top of Israel. "R" for Rehoboam comes second - he is from the south - so picture him in the bottom part of Israel.



**Before Solomon dies, a prophet of the LORD came to Jeroboam with a dramatic message:**

1 Kings 11:38: (NASB) *... if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.*

This is huge - how often does a servant get to be king? He was not of the royal line. This is an extraordinary privilege for Jeroboam and his descendants.

Solomon dies and his son Rehoboam takes the throne as Israel's new king.

recap  
recap  
of Part I



**The discontented northern tribes choose Jeroboam as their spokesperson in presenting a petition to the new king:**

1 Kings 12:4: (NASB) *Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.*

Instead of taking the sound and just advice of the Solomon's experienced counselors, Rehoboam instead takes advice from the young men he grew up with. Bad idea! Their counsel of oppressing the people even further was fundamentally opposed to what the experienced counselors had expressed.



In Part I, we talked about how he was "advice shopping."

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel.

This is a common way to seek counsel even today! The 10 northern tribes were angry and appointed Jeroboam as their king. There are now clear national dividing lines forming. God's chosen people will soon be called Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

**After a representative of King Rehoboam is stoned to death, the king aggressively asserts his kingly authority:**

1 Kings 12:21: (NASB) *Rehoboam...assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel...*

**God intervened and sent His prophet to the king:**

1 Kings 12:22-24: (KJV) *Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me.*

This is a powerful statement - *this thing is from Me. I, God, am allowing this to happen to you. You need to accept it.* This is an interesting and powerful principle which operates in our lives as well as in ancient times.



For about three years, Rehoboam DID walk according to God's Laws. However, he then turned to disobedience through gross idolatry.

**Rehoboam's life is sadly summed up this way:**

2 Chronicles 12:14: (NASB) *He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.*

Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
or  
**PROTECTING**  
my privileges?



The lessons from the account of Rehoboam and Jeroboam have thus far given us much to think about. With the advantage of hindsight, we can see exactly where they went wrong and why. The question is, could we be doing the same thing?



As we look at the extraordinary PRIVILEGE OF KINGSHIP THAT BOTH REHOBOAM AND JEROBOAM WERE BLESSED WITH BY GOD, let's break down some of the privileged elements:

- **THEY WERE CHOSEN:** Solomon (chosen of God) chose his son Rehoboam as his successor and God chose Jeroboam for the northern tribes.
- **THEY WERE CHOSEN TO ROYALTY:** To be a king is to be the most powerful influencer in the nation. They were chosen to a high position - the seat of power.
- **THEY WERE SOVEREIGNS OVER GOD'S OWN PEOPLE:** No greater power and privilege existed on earth among men than that given to those who would rule God's nation, Israel. What an incredible responsibility!
- **THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE TO DO THINGS GOD'S WAY AND HIS WAY ALONE:** The guidelines for success were plainly laid out for them to follow.

The great privilege God gave these men was amazing!



#### WHAT ABOUT US?

The true disciples of Jesus are given even HIGHER and even MORE ENDURING privileges than Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

Let's think about the grace found in Christian privilege. What do we deserve from our Christianity? Nothing, as we are sinful. Yet God gives us incredible opportunity and privilege.

#### Let's analyze this opportunity and privilege we are given:

1 Peter 2:9: (NASB) *But you are a **chosen** <1588> race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

**Chosen:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1588 *eklektós*; select; by implication favorite

#### A CHOSEN RACE:

Chosen out of all nations to follow Jesus for the purpose of reconciling the world to God through Christ.

#### This word for "chosen" is only used in the New Testament to describe Jesus and his true disciples:

Revelation 17:14: (NASB) *...and the Lamb will overcome them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are the called and **chosen** and faithful.*



Rehoboam (through his father Solomon) and Jeroboam were chosen of God, yet the scriptures tell us WE are chosen as well. They were chosen to reign for a lifetime. The true Christian receives a heavenly call to reign with Jesus for eternity. Which is the bigger responsibility and privilege?



### A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD:

The true disciples of Jesus are chosen to lead (*royal*) and revive (*priesthood*) the lives and spirituality of all humanity in the resurrection.

2 Timothy 2:12: (NASB) *If we endure, we will also reign with him...*

1 Peter 2:5: (NASB) *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

These two kings were not chosen to be priests; they were only chosen to reign as kings. A royal priesthood...priesthoods are not usually connected to royalty, but the one described in 1 Peter for the true Christian is. Combining royalty with the priesthood - the reviving of the people's relationship with God - makes the king-only privilege of Jeroboam and Rehoboam look small in comparison. When we look at all that God did for them, we need to stop, look and think about what God has given US.

### A HOLY NATION:

A nation is a body of people united under one government, and having common interests and bound by mutual obligations and mutual consent to conserve those interests.

**This holy nation is chosen to be the example of full compliance with God - with Christ as our king.**

Daniel 7:27: (NLT) *Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever...*

*The sovereignty...of all the kingdoms...will be given to the holy people of the Most High.* We talked about Rehoboam and Jeroboam being sovereigns (kings) of God's own people, the nation of Israel. True Christians have that same privilege and opportunity in a heavenly sense, only it lasts for eternity! It is a bigger, stronger and more enduring privilege. We should never minimize the privilege we have been given. The depth of the opportunity we have been given is beyond what any of us deserves.

### A PEOPLE FOR GOD'S OWN POSSESSION:

The King James Version translates this as *a peculiar people*. What makes a true Christian (someone really trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus) *peculiar* or different from every other person on earth? They have been chosen to be sons of God and have God's plans working through them. They are spiritual "new creatures."

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Titus 2:14: (NASB) *who gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

Jeroboam and Rehoboam had the opportunity to be responsible for God's people, the nation of Israel. We, on the other hand, are *a people for His own possession* - put in a position of powerful responsibility and privilege far beyond what those ancient kings were given.



Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
or  
**PROTECTING**  
my privileges?



The similarity of the awesome privilege we have as true disciples of Christ with these two kings is breathtaking. Let us seriously and intentionally focus on learning from their mistakes as we are plainly subject to the same kinds of human flaws.

We are also subject to the grace of God - should we seek it and look for it when we need it most - every day!

The thought of being given a greater privilege than even the kings of Israel were given is a staggering privilege.

Having sharpened our focus on the enormity of our privileges, how will we find Jeroboam faring?

The last thing Jeroboam knew was that Rehoboam did NOT attack the north and DID begin to follow in God's ways. Being the king of the northern 10 tribes, Jeroboam (previously a servant) had God's promise of blessing if he would be godly in his decisions and reign.

Seeing Rehoboam follow after God must have been an odd piece for Jeroboam to fit into his faithfulness puzzle.

Jeroboam now had choices to make.

Picking up where we left off in recounting Rehoboam's (son of Solomon - king of the south) direction:

**1 Kings 12:24:** (NASB) *Thus says the LORD, You must not go up and fight against your relatives, the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me. So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD.*

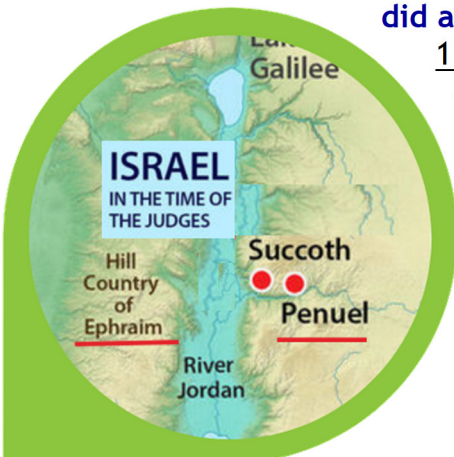
It seems that there was a godly streak in Rehoboam after all, and he is surprisingly following God's direction. He sends 180,000 men home rather than attack Jeroboam in the north.

The very next verse tells us what Jeroboam did as Rehoboam was now following God:

**1 Kings 12:25:** (NASB) *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.*

Ephraim was the largest of the ten tribes that separated from the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Why does it say that *Jeroboam built Shechem* when we learned in Part I that King Rehoboam had his coronation there? Obviously the city already existed. Bible Commentaries like *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* say: "...he repaired the walls of it, fortified it, and built a palace in it for his residence."





*The Pulpit Commentary* adds: “It was naturally Jeroboam's first care to strengthen his position by fortifying his capital, and the more so as this city would be particularly obnoxious to Rehoboam as the scene of the revolution.”

Jeroboam then rebuilt Penuel. This city might sound familiar because it is where Jacob wrestled with an angel ([Genesis 32:24-32](#)) and was later destroyed by Gideon ([Judges 8:1-21](#)).

(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible) *Built Shechem* - not that this city had lain in ruins from the times of Abimelech ([Judges 9:45](#)) for then it would not have been a proper place for the convention of the people ([1 Kings 12:1](#)), but he repaired the walls of it, and fortified it, and built a palace in it for his residence and went out from thence, and built Penuel; a place on the other side Jordan, the tower of which was beaten down by Gideon ([Judges 8:17](#)) and might be now rebuilt, or at least the city was repaired by him, and anew fortified, perhaps for the better security of his dominions on that side of Jordan.

(Source: *The Pulpit Commentary*) It would secure (the tribes of) Reuben and Gad against invasion from Judah.

This was very strategic and immediate. He shored up and fortified first where he would live, and then made a strategic move to protect two of his tribes from a possible invasion from Rehoboam.

Jeroboam, the king of the north, saw God's blessing on his rival, the king of the south. His first acts were those of building his residence and fortifying his positions. Interestingly, they were not acts of worship, sacrifice, praise, honor or reverence. These acts were about him, Jeroboam. He overlooked the One who gave him this opportunity. There would have been massive civil war had God not intervened with Rehoboam, and had Rehoboam not listened. Israel had the blessing of national peace because Rehoboam listened to God. Civil war is never good for either side.



**Our processing of newly granted privileges must be done with an eye towards the subtlety of sin. Is our first thought one of settling in to this privilege in our most comfortable and self-preserving way? Or, are our first thoughts and actions to just stop and praise the One who gave us this opportunity? Beware the subtlety of self-preservation over giving honor to God!**

It is so easy to settle in and say, “I’m good, I’m good - God gave me this privilege, so I can form it the way I like it with this vision of how I want my life to go...” We need to be careful. Every step we take should be about honoring God.

With his focus on HIS kingdom and not being the steward of God's people, whom he had been given the responsibility to rule, Jeroboam now begins to suffer from the malady of all self-focused leaders...

### Paranoia!

**1 Kings 12:26-27:** (NASB) <sup>26</sup>*Jeroboam said in his heart, now the kingdom will return to the house of David. <sup>27</sup>If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.*

Jeroboam is getting paranoid that when the people go to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem (in the south), they will yearn for their religious heritage. He was afraid that they would then kill him and become subjects of King Rehoboam. He purposefully starts plotting *in his heart* to turn the nation away from worshipping in the south. How is he going to do this - through idolatry!



**Great opportunities are often destroyed by small decisions.**  
— *Life Application Study Bible*

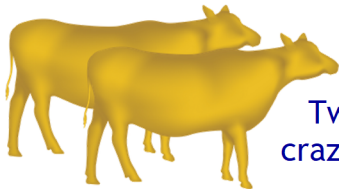
Jeroboam recognizes the need for God and the need for following God's Law, but his recognition does not bring him comfort or claiming God's blessing, instead it brings him fear and doubt.

He knows the people are supposed to go to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem in the south, because that is what God said. But that is a problem for him. He does not like that the people have to go south where God said they have to go. He does not want it that way because then they are going to want to be with that king!

**What do subtle fear and doubt produce? They produce rationalized, God-dishonoring conclusions:**

**1 Kings 12:28:** (NJB) *So the king **thought this over** <3289> and then made two golden calves; he said to the people, You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!*

**Thought this over:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3289 *ya'ats*; a primitive root; to advise; reflexively, to deliberate or resolve



Wait a minute; how is this possible? Two golden calves? Really? Does Jeroboam not remember Israel's history about a golden calf? Two calves are double trouble. Could anyone go along with this craziness?

Jeroboam thinks this through and solves the problem all by himself! He figures he has this all nailed down!

In preparing for this episode, we were all discussing how this could go so bad so quickly. Unfortunately, Solomon's idolatry had already polluted the people. Jeroboam and the people would have been used to this. They had worshipped a pantheon of idols during Solomon's reign. We read this today in shock and disgust, but we assume the people would have easily accepted this.

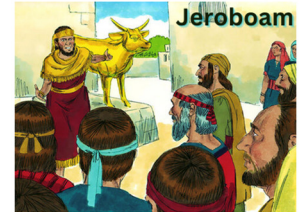
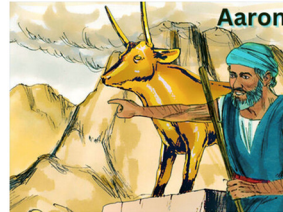
Think about Jeroboam's thought process; *You have been going up* (south, but up in altitude) *to Jerusalem long enough. I have had enough of you going to God's city, the chosen place.* Seriously? Golden calves?

Jeroboam repeats the words of the people who stood before Aaron 500 years earlier. Remember, Moses was up in the mountain for a long time getting the Ten Commandments. The people began to think that he was never coming back and began to rebel, so Aaron rallied them around the golden calf to try to reestablish control.

## That was a grave error, and then Jeroboam repeats the grave error:

**Exodus 32:3-4:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

Obviously, Jeroboam knows Israel's history because he repeated Aaron's words. He is not ignorant to what is happening. He is selective in what he pays attention to.



*This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.*

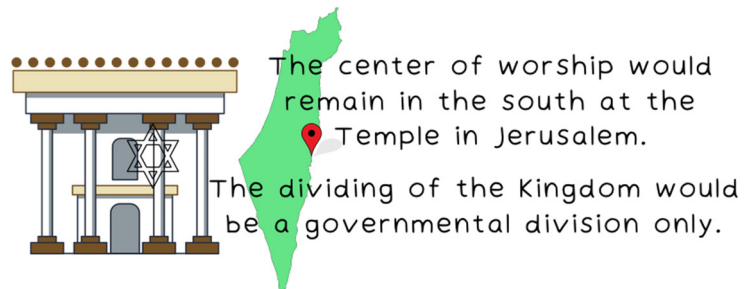
This was an attention getter. It is very logical on a sinful level. The people needed a new and different representation of God to keep them out of the southern tribe of Judah. Jeroboam used the calves as a way of doing that.

**1 Kings 12:29:** (NASB) *He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.*

They were strategically put along the roads (in apparently established places of idolatry) travelers would take to get to Jerusalem in the south. Bethel was 10 miles north of Jerusalem on the main road. Dan was the northernmost city in Israel, so it would be attractive to people to take a shortcut to worship in these areas rather than going all the way down to the south. When people take a shortcut, they are cut short in their worship of God. There is never a shortcut to honoring and reverencing the heavenly Father.

While the "logic" of Jeroboam was to make worship easy, the spiritual integrity of Jeroboam was nowhere to be found. His only concern was the preservation of what he saw to be his throne and in protecting this concern he turned the privilege and opportunity given to him by God into his own personal entitlement. This happens to many people in a lot of circumstances. Just because we are a Christian does not mean we are exempt.

He saw the opportunity for peace for all of Israel as a threat. They were all supposed to be loyal to God, and we said in Part I that the dividing of the kingdom was a governmental division only. The center of worship was to remain in the south at the Temple of Jerusalem. Jeroboam was in effect trying to build an invisible wall between the northern and southern tribes. NOT AUTHORIZED - FAIL!



The center of worship would remain in the south at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The dividing of the kingdom would be a governmental division only.

God established the worship to cross borders on purpose, but Jeroboam thinks he knows what is best.





## This is God's reaction the first time His chosen people worshipped a golden calf:

**Exodus 32:7-8,10:** (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. <sup>8</sup>They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it... <sup>10</sup>Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.

God's reaction is to say He will destroy these people and make of Moses a great (new) nation. God knew Moses would beg and plead for them on the basis that Moses and God have put a lot of work into them! God's point is that this action - the forming of a golden calf to worship - is NOT worthy of His favor. We can see, plainly, that this is a very serious breach of God's favor. What about us?



We would NEVER replace the sacredness of God with pagan calves of convenience! Really? What about half-hearted service? What about just hearing the Word without studying the Word? What about logging in to attend our services online when we could actually be there? What about reducing the moral standards of Scripture because they are so old-fashioned? These may all be examples of calves of convenience. Have I polluted my privilege?

Jeroboam is setting up a standard of convenience, and with a standard of convenience comes a broken loyalty. From a broken loyalty comes disfavor from God. Just as with Jeroboam, we have disfavor right around the corner if we take a shortcut which then cuts short God's mercy in our lives.

This is just plain scary now! It is far too easy to take small steps away from the core values of our privilege for the sake of personal convenience.

**Jeroboam diverted the ten tribe's spiritual focus and worship to idolatry!  
What else did he do?**

Not only did Jeroboam create these "calves of convenience," but he placed them in such a way so as to sever the people from God's specifically designated worship practices and locations. It is one level of sin to allow the people to maintain an idolatrous belief; it is another level entirely of sin to not only make it convenient, but to encourage the people away from worshipping God!

It is not surprising the people so quickly turned to idolatry like the nations around them. They were cut off from the royal tribe and family, far removed from the Temple and the proper way to approach the LORD, and convenience and comfort were far too easy to accept.

Remember, Jeroboam was a valiant warrior and talented servant. Solomon put him in a favored position, and then God chose him because someone strong and capable was needed in the kingship. But Jeroboam took his strength and talent and made it all about himself. This step put the ten northern tribes into a disastrous position before God.



## Why a calf? Why not a lion or some other animal?



Figurines of bulls and calves have been found at several Canaanite sites, but it is thought that the Israelites got that from the Egyptians. The Egyptians revered bulls. They recorded the birth of special Apis bulls, registered their ages at death and buried them in shrines.

(Source: Wikipedia) Apis was the most popular of three great bull cults of ancient Egypt, the others being the cults of Mnevis and Buchis. ...This animal was chosen because it symbolized the courageous heart, great strength and fighting spirit of the king. Apis came to being considered a manifestation of the king, as bulls were symbols of strength and fertility, qualities that are closely linked with kingship.

This reminds us of the phrase: **"STRONG LIKE BULL!"**


**1 Kings 12:30-31:** (NASB) <sup>30</sup>Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. <sup>31</sup>And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) The legitimate priests and Levites who lived in the northern ten tribes did not like this. They, along with others who set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel, moved from the northern kingdom of Israel to the southern kingdom of Judah during this period (2 Chronicles 11:13-16).

**WE HAVE IDOLS - AND NOT JUST ANY IDOLS; THEY ARE EGYPTIAN!**  
This is the "WHO AND WHAT" of the problem.

**WE HAVE THE IDOLS' IDOLATROUS LOCATIONS, BUILT ON THE "HIGH PLACES" OF PAGANISM.**  
This is the "WHERE" of the problem.

**WE HAVE AN IDOLATROUS PRIESTHOOD!**  
This is the "HOW" of the problem.



This is dark and sinister but logical. Of course, they have to do this! This logic is as ungodly as it can be. They are taking the people from God and moving them to where and who Jeroboam wanted them to be.

Jeroboam's commitment to idolatry was deep and solid. He replaced every tangible aspect of worshipping God with newly appointed people, places and things. It is easy to see where this will lead.

Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
or  
**PROTECTING**  
my privileges?



Along with the pagan calves of convenience always comes the structure to support them. Again, the subtlety of sinful thoughts and feelings take hold and dictate. After all, it is reasonable and logical to put the support in place to make our godless worship have a clear place to be found and a clear method to be pursued. Let us instead, always and ever, only worship the LORD our God! Serve only Him in the way He requires us to serve Him. We have choices.

## Jeroboam is teaching us all the wrong things we should not be doing:

**1 Kings 12:32:** (NASB) *Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made...*

(Source: Albert Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible) A feast intended as a substitute for the Feast of Tabernacles... (Now he is setting up counterfeit feasts - something Satan would love!) It may also have assumed the character of a feast of dedication, held at the same time, after the example of Solomon. (1Kings 8:2) His object in changing the month from the seventh to the eighth, and yet keeping the day of the month, is not clear. Perhaps it was on account of the later vintage of the more northern regions.

## We have the “when” - a NEW feast on a NEW date, and the “why” - I want it this way, with the people worshipping with me:

**1 Kings 12:32-33:** (NASB) <sup>32</sup>...And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. <sup>33</sup>Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

(Source: JewishEncyclopedia.com) The sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, where the golden calves were enshrined, were old and recognized places of worship and pilgrimage. The king, by making them royal sanctuaries, gave these old places new significance.

Wait a minute! *Devised in his own heart?! Did he just make up his own religion? Fake location, fake priests, fake feast, fake gods - what part of this did he think was a good idea? He himself is making these sacrifices, “legitimizing” for the people what he set up. He saw the priests as a threat to his leadership because they had loyalty to Jerusalem in the south, so he replaced them.*

Jeroboam does the sacrificing. As king he has taken on the mantel of priest, so now he is king AND priest! Not so in God’s eyes!



He would have known Israel’s history, so there was no excuse for going down this road. Two examples: In Leviticus 10:1, Aaron the high priest had two sons who offered strange fire or improper incense on the altar, and they were struck dead. In 1 Samuel 13:9, King Saul offered a burnt offering after a battle he won. It was only the Prophet Samuel who had God’s permission to offer sacrifices. Because of Saul’s disobedience, he lost his kingship.

Jeroboam had examples of the priesthood and the kingship going wrong before him. Nevertheless, he puts both in place. It is a classic example of someone so fixated on their own power that they would do anything to keep it - even if it meant keeping the people away from the influence of the true God. Remember, it was God who told Jeroboam he would be blessed if he followed God’s ways.

## Now it is not just worship; it is ritual! People love rituals. Let’s re-read God’s promise to Jeroboam:

**1 Kings 11:37-38:** <sup>37</sup>I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup>Then it will be, that **IF** you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, **THEN** I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.



**IF** you do what is right, **THEN** I will give Israel to you. Jeroboam had a 100 percent guarantee of success and favor from the one true God. Instead of following, he led. Why?

**IF we do - THEN God will bless. We can never forget this!**

Why would Jeroboam move away from God? Perhaps some of it was out of confidence in his own valor; perhaps some was out of a lust for power. In any case, he feared losing what he determined was his instead of reverencing God as the giver of his privilege. This is a paranoia that came from self-absorbed leadership.

One thing we know for sure - so far, we do not see him asking the LORD for help.

It is about the IF and the THEN. IF you want a king, THEN there are consequences. This is exactly what happened when the Israelites rejected the judges and wanted a king instead. The Prophet Samuel told them the consequences of having a king, but they did not care. They wanted a king like the other nations. Now they find themselves in this position of having two bad kings. This is the result of going against God. When God puts something in place, He does it for a specific reason. He is very clear. We wonder how many would have preferred going back to having judges?



**Remember that our opportunity and privilege is, if faithful, to reign with Christ and be part of the Priesthood that by God's grace and through Jesus' sacrifice will reconcile the world. Let us put away any thoughts, actions and rituals of spiritual convenience and focus only on honoring and fulfilling what God has given us in a way that brings Him ALL glory.**

All of this seems too bad to be true. Getting tripped up in a sin is one thing but taking such a nosedive is incomprehensible.

**We can see that Jeroboam responded just as unfaithfully as Rehoboam to God's gracious privileges. What was his end result?**

Whenever anyone who has God's favor decides to become self-serving instead of God-serving, the end result is always the same. Pagan idols built in irreverent locations served by an idolatrous priesthood on unholy days can only lead to failure before our Maker. Further, Jeroboam not only created all of this, he legitimized it before the people by personally making the sacrifices. He was essentially saying: "I am your king, you can trust me, see what I am doing? You can follow me."

**Let's return to that scene because something else is about to develop here:**

**1 Kings 12:33:** (NASB) *Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.*

Jeroboam led the people away from God. He mightily contributed to the corruption of their faith!



**Jeroboam wasn't ignorant of what God wanted, and in many cases, neither are we.**  
— *Life Application Study Bible*:

*“If Jeroboam had possessed a living faith in Jehovah, he would not have resorted to setting up idol worship in an effort to keep those under his rulership from visiting Jerusalem where they might be weaned away from his authority. Faith would have convinced him that God was able to build him a ‘sure (ruling) house,’ and that he did not need to resort to forbidden measures to maintain his authority over the northern tribes.” - Brad Sweeney (friend of Christian Questions)*

It comes down to faith in God. Jeroboam was an example of what NOT to do - he had faith in everything but God: his own mind, his own thoughts, his own throne, his own way and his own power.

**God noticed and wasted no time in calling Jeroboam out and sent a prophet from the south to him:**

1 Kings 13:1: (NASB) *Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense.*

Remember, Judah was in the south; Bethel was in the north. This story is about to get really interesting. Notice, God had to send a representative up to the north from Judah in the south.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) Apparently, there were no qualified messengers within the northern kingdom of Israel. This is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of Jeroboam's kingdom.

God had to send somebody from the south to go to the north to remonstrate with Jeroboam. This is awful that his kingdom had fallen so far spiritually. They had an unsanctioned altar with an unsanctioned idol, in an unsanctioned place with an unsanctioned offering, being led by an unsanctioned priest.



**God ALWAYS provides us corrective warnings through His word and those who are spiritually sound. Will we listen and protect our privilege?**

We can be sure we will have ample warnings. Are we going to be looking for this warning, heeding it? Or, will we push it aside because we have our own objective to accomplish? This is what happens with Jeroboam.

**God's prophet would plainly proclaim the destruction of Jeroboam's idolatrous work:**

1 Kings 13:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*He cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.* <sup>3</sup>*Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.*

What an odd scene! This man of God is talking to the altar, *altar, altar*, and actually names names - prophesying that someone named Josiah would come and burn the bones of the false priests on this very altar. That came true in 2 Kings 23:17-20 much, much later. **See the Bonus Material** for this account.

Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
 or  
**PROTECTING**  
 my privileges?



**Our idolatrous unrighteousness cannot stand before God. Will we acknowledge our pollution of God's privilege and rejoice in its destruction?**

The Apostle Paul, when he was first called Saul of Tarsus, performed idolatrous behavior by forsaking the Law with violence and injustice against the early church. Power and self-righteousness came from him alone by not following the Law of God to *love your neighbor as yourself*. Later in Philippians 3:8, Paul counted his past achievements as loss, rejoicing only in Jesus.



One of the things Paul did right was to be honest with us about the scary and shameful things he did in God's name. He was out of control and going in the wrong direction. These are good lessons for us.

Similarly, when we see Jeroboam fall from God's favor, we should learn that lesson. Comparing Jeroboam's fall with the Apostle Paul's turn-around, we see there can be hope in situations like this. Dramatic miracles followed.

**The prophet would powerfully and plainly deliver God's judgment and yet this judgment would be delivered with mercy as well:**

1 Kings 13:4-6: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, Seize him. But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.

Jeroboam points and says, "Seize this prophet, this man of God, I want him off the scene." Most likely he pointed with his right hand - the right hand of the power of the throne that he sits upon by the grace of God - and it withered before his eyes. What an attention-getting message! He misused the power of the throne given to him from God. They all saw it wither.



<sup>5</sup>The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The king said to the man of God, Please entreat the LORD your God (NOTICE: Not the LORD OUR God), and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me. So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before.

Good news - Jeroboam is finally looking to God! Bad news - the only time he talks to God is to ask to be healed. He is not looking for God's guidance and direction, power or providence. He just wants his hand back so that he can rule the way he wants. The altar has fallen apart before his very eyes. How dramatic - this was a message to straighten up and turn his ways around! We say we would certainly get that message. But would we? How do we know?



Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
or  
**PROTECTING**  
my privileges?



**God, in His providence, can and will put obstacles and challenges in the way of our polluted practices. He will also show us of His mercy by reminding us who is sovereign. Do we heed our corrective experiences and protect our privileges?**



We can look at Jeroboam and say we would never do that. But do we create modern calves of convenience, following the same kind of road as Jeroboam?

He had every opportunity - the hand is healed, the altar crumbled; no one questioned those signs came from God. Jeroboam has just been spared, now is the time to turn his life around. It is the perfect time to fall to his knees and tell the prophet, "I have sinned before God!" Remember David, *the man after God's own heart*, before Nathan the prophet? That is what he did when he sinned and repented.

**God's prophet would then leave after refusing any hospitality or gift, for his work was done:**

**1 Kings 13:7-10:** (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Then the king said to the man of God, Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward. <sup>8</sup>But the man of God said to the king, If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. <sup>9</sup>For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, you shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came. <sup>10</sup>So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.

*Oh, so you are going to buy an ally, are you, Jeroboam?* We do not detect any reverence or humility here. He is saying the prophet has done his bidding, so maybe he would like to live here in the north and work for the king. After all, Jeroboam could use the prophet's power and influence. We can see the king's overwhelming pride and ego spilling out. Jeroboam is attempting to bribe the man of God. We would never do this! ...Really?

Am I  
**POLLUTING**  
or  
**PROTECTING**  
my privileges?



**God will always show us enough to direct us back to Him, but He won't MAKE us mend our ways. Once God's messages have been delivered to show us how and what to change, do we remain polluters of our privileges or do we become protectors?**

What are WE choosing?

**What did Jeroboam choose?**

**1 Kings 13:33-34:** (NASB) <sup>33</sup>...Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places. <sup>34</sup>This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.

Jeroboam is making everyone who wants to be a priest, a priest! **1 Kings 14:10** prophesied that because of his lack of righteous leadership, every male heir of Jeroboam's would be cut off and the family line would lose the throne.



As time went on, the north and south waged war against each other. Jeroboam suffered defeats from his old nemesis, Rehoboam's son, Abijah. God strikes Jeroboam and he dies, ending his 22-year reign. His son Nadab becomes king. In the second year of his reign, when Nadab's army is attacking a Philistine town, Nadab's captain, Baasha, betrays and kills him, making himself king. This ends the ruling house of Jeroboam. What betrays God ends up in destruction. It ended in disgrace!

**THE END**



Do I want to end MY legacy there?  
Am I throwing away this great privilege and opportunity that God has given me?

Good King Josiah would indeed come - about 340 years later! God allows a lot of things to happen because of things we do. He allows us, and those around and after us, to feel the logical consequences of our actions.

King Josiah would eliminate all idolatrous worship, return everyone to true worship, and tried to follow all the Laws and commandments of God.

This is one of the ways we know the Bible is divinely inspired. There is no way that man of God could have accurately predicted by name what this future king Josiah would do hundreds of years later - except by divine inspiration.



It can be dangerously easy to begin down a path of polluting our privileges to follow Christ. Let us realize that we, at every step, have God's grace there to guide, direct, nudge and chasten. Are we focused enough to hear and follow? Faithfulness is not an activity of convenience. Let us protect the great privilege of our lives every hour of every day!

We are given a privilege, an opportunity, so what do we do? We must protect that which God gives us so that it can grow, develop and mature in us, working the work He would have it to do.



Revelation 2:10: (NASB) Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Now we can see what the power of being faithful really means by looking at the mistakes and the bad choices of others and saying: "This is not where I will go! I will protect and reverence the privileges and opportunities from God that I am given."

**So, am I throwing away my life's greatest privilege?  
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.





Join us next week for our podcast on March 20, 2023

Ep. 1273: What Can David, a Battlefield  
and Cheese Teach Us?

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

#### Here is where the prophecy of Josiah came true:

**2 Kings 23:17-20:** <sup>17</sup>Then he said, What gravestone is this that I see? So the men of the city told him, It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel. <sup>18</sup>And he said, Let him alone; let no one move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. <sup>19</sup>Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. <sup>20</sup>He executed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) Jeroboam had great opportunity, but instead became a great curse to every generation of the northern kingdom after that. Even at the end of the Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam's sin was remembered: For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day (2 Kings 17:21-23).

All in all, Jeroboam is an example of sinful failure:

- He failed despite great blessing and favor from God.
- He failed for the sake of mere political advantage.
- He failed and led an entire nation into idolatry.
- He failed despite specific warnings to repent.
- He failed despite specific judgment and deliverance from that judgment.
- He failed despite a clear message and example of integrity.

#### Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

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# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1272: Am I Throwing Away My Life's Greatest Privilege? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1272-privilege-part-ii/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

1. Who are the two key people in this account? Explain their backgrounds. What did the prophet of the LORD promise Jeroboam? What did Jeroboam ask of king Rehoboam? How did Rehoboam react? What were the privileged elements of their kingship? How do the great privileges given by God to these kings compare with a Christian's privileges? (See 1 Kings 11:28-38, 12:4,21-24)
2. Read 1 Peter 2:9 and consider the following:
  - a. In what way are we a "chosen race"? What is the purpose of this privilege? (See 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 17:14)
  - b. Why are the true disciples of Jesus called a "royal priesthood"? What is the responsibility of being royalty? Of being a priest? (See 1 Peter 2:5, 2 Timothy 2:12)
  - c. What is a "holy nation"? What does it represent? (See Daniel 7:27)
  - d. What makes a true Christian "peculiar" or different? What will be their responsibilities in God's kingdom? (See 2 Corinthians 5:17, Titus 2:14)
3. How does Jeroboam react when Rehoboam sends his army home and for a time follows God, receiving blessings? What should Jeroboam have done when God saved the country from civil war? What is the source of his paranoia, and what does he fear? What does he decide to do? How did God react to the first golden calf during the time of Moses? How could we fall into worshipping "calves of convenience"? (See 1 Kings 12:24-29, Exodus 32:3-10)
4. Why did the people of northern Israel so easily fall into idolatry? Where were all of God's priests? In what ways did Jeroboam contribute to this spiritual downfall? How did Israel's history warn him? Reread God's initial promise to him. What was required in order to remain in a favored position? (See 1 Kings 11:37-38, 12:30-33, Leviticus 10:1, 1 Samuel 13:9)
5. How did Jeroboam "legitimize" this idolatry? In what did Jeroboam have faith? How did God's prophet warn the king? What was Jeroboam's reaction? What was the result of his foolishness and the ultimate result of his failure to serve the true God? (See 1 Kings 12:33, 13:1-10,33-34, 14:10) When did the prophet's prophecy come true? Who was King Josiah and what did he do? (See 2 Kings 23:17-20)
6. Answer the following questions about yourself:
  - What have you learned from the mistakes of these two kings? Have you ever made similar choices?
  - Have you ever replaced the sacredness of God with "calves of convenience"?
  - How are you serving God? Is it in the way He requires us to serve Him? What might you need to do differently? How have you heeded God's corrective warnings and experiences in your life?
  - How do you appreciate and value the enormous privilege and opportunity given to God's chosen? How are you living and fulfilling the privileges God has given you?