

READING PLAN WEEK 4 for The Epic of Eden – Isaiah
The Life and Times of Isaiah the Prophet, Part I: The Divided Monarchy

Word from the Author: If we are going to understand Isaiah's message, we need to first understand Isaiah's world. What does it look like? What's going on? Who is his audience? Why is he focusing on the topics at hand? There are two things we MUST understand to get the right backdrop to Isaiah's life and preaching; a) the Divided Monarchy and the religious compromise it created, and b) the rise of Israel's greatest opponent, the Neo-Assyrian Empire. This session, we're focusing on the Divided Monarchy.

Day #1: Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Make a note of the boundary God is imposing on the Israelites as they choose their king. List the things that an Israelite king must NOT do. Why do you think these particular actions might compromise a king's performance? What are the things an Israelite king MUST do? Why do you think these particular actions would improve and protect a king's performance? **Read 1 Kings 4:26, 10:14-22; 11:1-8.** Think about Solomon's attitude to God's instructions. How could it be that this king celebrated for his wisdom could fail so miserably to follow four simple instructions?

Day #2: Read 1 Kings 11:9-13. The United Monarchy of Israel only lasted for her first three kings (Saul, David, and Solomon). After that there were TWO kingdoms; Israel in the North and Judah in the South [the tribe of Simeon had been absorbed into Judah by this time]. The words just read were the words of God to Solomon, a verdict on his disobedience. **Read 1 Kings 11:26-39.** Here is a further prophecy which details the dividing of the United Monarchy which will take place in 931BC. (Note the method the prophet Ahijah uses to describe the upcoming act of God.) **Read 1 Kings 11:41-12:24.** This will lead you succinctly through the distresses of the Northern tribes and bad council of Rehoboam (Solomon's son) which broke asunder the United Monarchy.

Day #3: Read 1 Kings 12:25-33. This is a very dark consequential digression for the people of God. Out of his insecurity, Jeroboam, the king of the Northern kingdom, institutes idolatry to keep his Northern kingdom subjects from considering reunification with the Southern kingdom. Without an anchoring connection to the faith of their ancestors, they are easily led away from the living God and toward an early exile altogether.

This week's reflection question: Reflecting on the arc of this decline and break up of the Unified Monarchy, what principles can you glean for personal application? Literally, what can we learn from this? What does it say about human nature and our propensity to be turned away from what God ultimately desires for us? Mourning the dissolution of the Unified Monarchy, where, if anywhere, do we find God's faithfulness still at work?

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