

# The Kingdom Divides

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## 1 Kings 11:9-13

### - Introduction

- Sometimes it seems like God has abandoned us and taken his promises with him, but Scripture insists that God is unchanging & faithful to keep his promises. There is a tension here that, if we are honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge. Even though the Bible tells us the Spirit is with us, often enough he feels absent. Where is God when our loved ones die? Where is his promise when we aren't making enough money to provide for our families? Where is his guidance when our earthly rulers continue to falter? These are tough questions, but our faith has ways of reminding us, over and again of God's faithfulness. When we take communion, it's a reminder that God sustains us. When we raise our hands and voices in worship, it's a reminder that he gives us breath. God meets our doubt with loving embrace, our anger with forgiveness.

### - Leader Prep Help

- It's at this point in the history of ancient Israel that people tend to get a little hazy on what's going on and why, so some review and a look forward might help us: God brought Israel up out of Egypt under Moses, and they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Then Joshua led them into Canaan, where God wanted them to conquer the land in judgement of the people there, to establish a holy kingdom where God could dwell with his people in peace. After Joshua died, there was a series of judges that led Israel in this mission, but Israel never really did what God asked them to do. Then, all of Israel got together and made Saul king. David was king after him, and it's really under David that the people of God finally completed the conquest. Solomon rules after David, and the land is finally at peace. When Solomon builds the temple, God comes and dwells among his people. The promises of the past several generations of the people of God are realized.
- But we see in this passage that something is still wrong. Solomon begins to worship other gods, just like Israel did under the judges, so it's not the kingdom God wanted, and Israel isn't the people God wanted to make his name great. You can see this kingdom and people as a promise God makes to the world—something like this will establish my kingdom in the world and make my name great among the nations.
- God begins, at this point in the Old Testament, to judge Israel in pursuit of justice. First, the nation of Israel splits into two kingdoms, namely Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Jerusalem is in Judah. A series of kings, some good and some bad, rule both

kingdoms, but eventually God judges Israel (the northern kingdom) by allowing it to be conquered by the Assyrian empire. A few generations after that, the same thing happens to Judah (the southern kingdom)—the Babylonian empire conquers Judah, and at this point all of Israel is conquered. The temple is destroyed. Solomon's kingdom is no more.

- Eventually, Persia would conquer Babylon and allow some of Israel to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but sometime after Persia is conquered by Alexander the Great, the temple is destroyed again. Throughout all of these happenings, God sends prophets to call his people to worship him again, to remind them that he is faithful and will still fulfill his promises to Israel, despite all seeming. Greece divides and falls, Rome takes control in what is now Judea, and one morning in that backwater province of Rome, a child is born in a small town to a single teenage mother, and the world would never be the same. The kingdom of God had come after all, and God dwelt among his people again.

- Discussion Questions

- Read 1 Kings 11:9-13
- God always judges sin, and there is no mercy for the unrepentant.
  - Normally, when we think about people turning from God, we think of people who don't believe in God, but the end of verse 9 reminds us, that God had appeared to Solomon twice. What were Solomon's reasons for turning away from God, and do we do the same reasons?
  - We see very clearly here that God judges sin in pursuit of justice. Should Christians strive to be judgmental, because God is? How do we pursue justice alongside God?
  - If God always judges sin, then why do evil people prosper?
  - What can God's reaction to Solomon's sin teach us about how to react to sin in our own lives—our sins as well as sins against us?
- God always keeps his promises—to those who harden their hearts, and those who repent.
  - Reading Matthew 7:21-23, who are these people who have worked for Jesus their whole lives but are rejected from heaven? How concerned should we be that Jesus may turn us away?
  - What has God promised to those who repent from sin? How can we know if we have repented rightly and are forgiven?

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- We can see the sins of Solomon clearly in the passage, but sometimes our own sins are harder to see. If God were to call out the sins of Christians today, what would he say? What would he say to our Hope Community?
- When God makes a promise, there is always a remnant preserved.
  - Where else do we see this idea of remnant—just a few people preserving the promise of God—in the Bible, even in what we have already read, and what does the idea of God’s preserving a remnant have to do with the gospel?
  - Notice in our passage that David’s righteousness affects God’s relationship with Solomon. How much does our righteousness or sin affect those around us? How does our relationship with God affect our friends’ relationships, or our family members’?