

The Kingdom Divides

Lesson Scope: [2 Chronicles 8-12](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Israel reached the height of her glory as a kingdom under the reign of Solomon. His reign of peace was accompanied by unprecedented prosperity. His life could have ended well if he had honoured God by full obedience to Him. Solomon disobeyed God's command to utterly destroy the heathen nations; instead, he required them to pay tribute. The many heathen wives Solomon married led him away from God and into idolatry. The availability of all kinds of pleasures and delights resulted in sensual living, which he discovered was vanity and vexation of spirit. Solomon's compromises and toleration of idolatry formed a Wrong frame of reference for the next generation, influencing them to take further steps away from God.

Solomon's son Rehoboam, who reigned after him, chose unwisely to reject the counsel of older men. Consequently, the glorious kingdom was divided, partly through man's choices and partly by God's sovereign movings. Honouring the Lord opens the door to rich blessings. Forsaking the law of the Lord however propels a people down a road of frustration, turmoil, and loss.

This lesson is a study of cause and effect. Israel did not slide into heathenism in one swift move, but in incremental stages. The first step away from God started them on a course toward spiritual calamity. At the beginning, they did not see where this road would take them.

Help your class to understand that compromise and toleration of evil in one generation will produce a crop of rebellion and rejection of truth in the next generation.

Lesson Aim: To trace the course and the calamity of failing to honour the Lord.

Theme Verse: 1 Samuel 2:30. Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Lesson Text

Disobedience

2 Chronicles 8:7-8 ⁷ (KJV) *As for* all the people *that were* left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which *were* not of Israel, ⁸ *But* of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day.

2 Chronicles 8:11 ¹¹ (KJV) And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places are* holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

Division

2 Chronicles 9:31 ³¹ (KJV) And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles 10:3-4 ³ (KJV) And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying, ⁴ Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

2 Chronicles 10:13-14 ¹³ (KJV) And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, ¹⁴ And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

2 Chronicles 10:16 ¹⁶ (KJV) And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have* none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and* now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

2 Chronicles 10:19 ^{19 (KJV)} And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Defeat

2 Chronicles 12:1-5 ^{1 (KJV)} And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. ² And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD, ³ With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. ⁴ And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. ⁵ Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and *to* the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

2 Chronicles 12:9-10 ^{9 (KJV)} So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. ¹⁰ Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

2 Chronicles 12:14 ^{14 (KJV)} And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

Questions for Study

Disobedience

1. What were some dangers posed by the heathen nations Israel had allowed to remain in the land?
2. How Was Solomon's removal of his Egyptian wife from Jerusalem a compromise? What should he have done?
3. What are some unequal yokes we should avoid today?

Division

4. How did Rehoboam fail his people in his answer to their request?
5. Why did Israel want no part with the house of David?
6. What is the final outcome of rebellion?

Defeat

7. How did God judge Israel when they forsook His Law?
8. What are some results of failure in the church today?

Analysing the Passage

The heathen nations that were permitted to remain in Israel were considered a material asset because of the tribute money they paid (8:7-8). However, this was a violation of God's command to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of the land. These people became a spiritual liability through their evil influence and idolatry. This compromise and the failure to remain separate from these people opened Israel to intermarriage with them and to the worship of their gods.

The heathen wives Solomon married led him into idol worship (Nehemiah 13:26). God's wrath and judgment on Israel for their disobedience and unfaithfulness brought about the dividing of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:1-13).

The caring, compassionate rule of David was replaced by the heartless, selfish rule of Rehoboam, who rejected the old men's counsel (2 Chronicles 10:13). Israel rebelled against the grandson of David (10:19), and Jeroboam, Solomon's servant who had fled to Egypt when Solomon tried to kill him, became king over ten tribes (1 Kings 11).

After Shishak, king of Egypt, carried away the treasures in Jerusalem, Rehoboam replaced the shields of gold Solomon had made with shields of brass (2 Chronicles 12:9-10). Rehoboam's choice to do evil continued even after God's judgment on him (12:14). In his failure and disobedience, Rehoboam forfeited the heritage he had received from the former generation.

Principles and Applications

Disobedience

1. The seeds of failure exist even in the best of circumstances (8:7-8, 11). Despite all the blessings and material advantages Solomon possessed, he was led away from God by the influence of the heathen wives he married. Let us take warning lest associations we become involved in for social or financial advantage would lead us and our posterity away from God. We become like those with whom we associate.

2. The downward course is hastened when God's people fail to limit evil influences (8:8, 11). Though we are in the world, we are not of the world. As God's people, we must be proactive to avoid compromise with evil. The evil around us cannot be ignored. We must maintain conviction by taking seriously what God has told us about sin, lest its prevalence cause us to eventually accept it.

3. The course of failing to honour the Lord always includes going against better knowledge (8:11). Solomon evidently recognized that his idol-worshipping wife and the holy places of Jerusalem were incompatible. Yet that knowledge did not prevent him from marrying heathen wives. Overconfidence in self has led many to expose themselves to evil influences, believing they were strong enough to handle them without spiritual harm (Leviticus 18:3-4). God gives us warnings to help us to avoid failure in these matters.

Division

4. Unfaithfulness in one generation produces religious confusion and calamity in the rising generation (10:3-4, 13-14). Each generation begins with the frame of reference established by the previous generation. If the teaching given is not supported by a clear example, confusion results. Rehoboam did not learn from his father's wisdom, perhaps because he observed failure and inconsistency in his father's life. He rejected the voices of experienced, older men and unwisely chose to follow the untested and unproven advice of young men.

5. Each generation must make its own choices (10:3-4). Rehoboam had the opportunity to choose right and follow the older men's advice. Every man is granted the solemn responsibility to choose which master he will serve, and which path he will take. The narrow way and the broad way each lead the traveller to one of two diverse destinies. No one can justly blame someone else for the choices he makes.

6. Leaders who fail to honour the Lord allow selfishness and near-sightedness to influence their decisions (10:13-14). Selfish intents must be purged. Leaders should desire what will benefit their people, rather than taking a route that seems easier for them at the moment. Leaders should examine a proposed course of action and ask, "Is this sustainable for the coming years, and will it be adequate to keep us in the right way?"

7. Disdain for one's heritage and leadership is spiritually dangerous (10:16). Rehoboam's words and attitudes were not respectful. They provoked a negative reaction from the people. In their response, they rejected not only their failing leader, but the whole house of David and the good that went with it. Such a reaction resulted in an irreparable division and much strife for years to come. While wrongdoing by leaders is not justifiable, it is never right to repudiate one's heritage nor to disdain God-ordained leadership.

8. The effects of failure are far-reaching and permanent (10:19). "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). That which is done cannot be undone. The effects of failure can last for generations. By rejecting the house of David, these Jews alienated themselves from their worship centre at Jerusalem. This led to the alternate worship of idols and the permanent loss of their religious heritage.

Defeat

9. Failure to honour the Lord opens one to formidable enemies (12:1-5). The enemies of God's people take advantage of them in times of failure. Though Rehoboam strengthened himself, he forsook the Law of the Lord, thus separating himself from divine aid and placing himself under divine judgment. As Christians we will surely fail if we attempt to overcome the enemy of our souls without God's help.

10. Spiritual failure results in the departure of God's grandeur and glory (12:9-10). Did Rehoboam realize that when he made shields of brass to substitute for the golden shields his father had made, that it was due to the fact that he had forfeited God's blessing because of his spiritual failure? Are we satisfied with less than the full blessing of God, retaining only a weak connection to the church, and making a half-hearted effort to serve and obey God?

Important Teachings

1. The seeds of failure exist even in the best of circumstances (8:7-8, 11)
2. The downward course is hastened when God's people fail to limit evil influences (8:8, 11).
3. The course of failing to honour the Lord always includes going against better knowledge (8:11).

4. Unfaithfulness in one generation produces religious confusion and calamity in the rising generation (10:3-4, 13-14).
5. Each generation must make its own choices (10:3-4).
6. Leaders who fail to honour the Lord allow selfishness and Near-sightedness to influence their decisions (10:13-14).
7. Disdain for one's heritage and leadership is spiritually dangerous (10:16).
8. The effects of failure are far-reaching and permanent (10:19).
9. Failure to honour the Lord opens one to formidable enemies (12:1-5).
10. Spiritual failure results in the departure of God's grandeur and glory (12:9-10).

Answers to Questions

1. What were some dangers posed by the heathen nations Israel allowed to remain in the land?

Their gods were a snare to Israel. Socializing with them led to intermarriage, which God had forbidden. The evil deeds of the heathen had a conditioning effect on the minds of the Israelites, which led them to copy the ways of the heathen.

2. How was Solomon's removal of his Egyptian wife from Jerusalem a compromise? What should he have done?

It was a compromise because he evidently allowed her to continue the worship of her Egyptian gods in another location. He compromised by permitting both idol worship and also the worship of the God of his fathers. He should have removed all idolatry and all its influences at any cost.

3. What are some unequal yokes we should avoid today?

We may be asked to join in relief efforts in cooperation with others who do not share our faith. Even intermingling and socializing frequently in business associations with worldly-minded people leads to loss of conviction and a failure to be separate from the world. Family ties can become a challenge when convictions are compromised to appease family members.

4. How did Rehoboam fail his people in his answer to their request?

Though Rehoboam sought counsel before giving his answer, he foolishly accepted the counsel of those who favoured his carnal pride and selfish ambitions. He refused the people's offer to serve him and an-

swered them roughly. He alienated them by his short-sightedness when he could have had their loyalty and service, if only he had taken the advice of the older men.

5. Why did Israel want no part with the house of David?

Rehoboam, the earthly successor to the throne of David, did not possess the spiritual qualities of David. He was not a shepherd-king who sought the good of his people. He did not ask God for wisdom to lead Israel as his father did, but followed foolish counsel.

6. What is the final outcome of rebellion?

Rebellion against God-ordained leaders, even flawed leaders whose lives fail to conform to God's laws, cannot be condoned. Rebellion against anyone in a place of leadership brings one under God's judgment because God is the ultimate authority and the one who authorizes all human authority.

7. How did God judge Israel when they forsook His Law?

God allowed them to face their enemies in their own strength and did not aid or defend them. Thus God let them learn by experience that they were not able to withstand an enemy invasion without His help.

8. What are some results of failure in the church today?

When the church fails, the cause of God's enemies is strengthened. God's enemies gain that which should have been retained for Him and His use—the shields of gold, for example. The church that fails to stand strong and united will suffer loss of spiritual vitality and lose her testimony before the world.

Summarizing the Lesson

The course away from God begins in small ways, through compromise with evil, toleration of inconsistencies, and the accommodation of worldliness. It leads to rebellion, disobedience to God's Word, and taking one's own way. It ends tragically in the loss of God's presence and blessing. One is left in a state of frustration and defeat at the hands of the enemy.

Let us take warning so that we can avoid the failure depicted in this lesson, giving God the honour He deserves. Without God's protection, our end will be like Israel's.

Research Guide

1. See 1 Kings 11:28 through 12:33 for a parallel passage to this lesson.
2. Find examples from recent church history where wrong was tolerated by one generation and then accepted and even promoted by the next.