

Lesson 12 21 April 2013

The Kingdom Is Divided

Lesson Scope: [1 Kings 11:1 through 12:19](#)

Lesson Focus

In the early years of his reign, Solomon demonstrated extraordinary wisdom, sound judgment, splendor, and prosperity. He enjoyed greater privileges than most.

The last twenty years of Solomon's reign depict a change of course. He loved many strange women from the heathen nations around Israel. These women turned Solomon away from God and led him to sacrifice to their gods. God had given specific warning not only against marrying heathen wives (Exodus 34:14-16) but also against multiplying wives (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). By ignoring those warnings, Solomon fell from divine favor. His experience shows us that one can have wisdom and riches, enjoy God's favor, and receive multiple divine revelations, yet depart from God and fall into grievous sins.

Solomon's failure led to the division of Israel into two kingdoms. When his son, Rehoboam, foolishly refused the advice of experienced counselors, ten tribes rebelled and united under Jeroboam.

Full obedience to God's commands is of grave importance. Carelessness and compromise will surely lead one away from God and His promised blessings.

The tragic end of a life lived for self is set forth in the account of Solomon's reign. Most of us have observed persons who seemingly had everything going for them. They had godly parents, a faithful church to unite with, a prosperous farm or business, and many other benefits and privileges. Yet their lives ended in spiritual failure just as Solomon's did. They suffered loss, and succeeding generations were influenced negatively by their choices.

May this lesson help us to see that neglecting to obey God in small ways starts one on a course that leads to greater and more serious failures. The blessings and privileges we have can be lost. Sadly, the Bible does not indicate that Solomon repented of his idolatry or that he turned back to God later. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received

the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Lesson Aim: To trace the varying causes and tragic course of spiritual failure.

Theme Verses: [Hebrews 3:12-13](#). Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Lesson Text

Apostasy

[1 Kings 11:1-5](#) ¹ But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, *and* Hittites; ² Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. ³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

Judgment

[1 Kings 11:9-12](#) ⁹ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, ¹⁰ And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. ¹¹ Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. ¹² Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

Rebellion

1 Kings 12:1-5 ¹ And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. ² And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard *of it*, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) ³ That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, ⁴ Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. ⁵ And he said unto them, Depart yet *for* three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

1 Kings 12:12-19 ¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. ¹³ And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; ¹⁴ And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. ¹⁵ Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat. ¹⁶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. ¹⁷ But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. ¹⁸ Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Questions for Study

Apostasy

1. What downward steps led to Solomon's failure?
2. Why do people disobey God's Word in spite of the warnings about the tragic results?
3. How does carnal living lead one into deception and bondage?

Judgment

4. What reasons did God give for pronouncing judgment on Solomon?
5. How can we avoid spiritual neglect and failure?

Rebellion

6. Why did Rehoboam answer the people as he did?
7. What spiritual consequences followed the rebellion of the ten tribes'?
8. What factors can make us vulnerable to spiritual failure? Lesson 12

Analyzing the Passage

The Scriptures make it clear that Solomon disobeyed God by marrying heathen women from the nations around Israel (11:1, 2). It is also clear that these heathen wives caused Solomon to turn away from God to the worship of the gods they had brought with them. Solomon knew what God expected of him. God had appeared unto him twice. Although Solomon's wisdom far surpassed that of other men, he failed to profit from the good counsel he gave to others.

Many evil practices were associated with the worship of these heathen gods. In an attempt to please his wives, Solomon joined them in the worship of their gods. Solomon did not merely tolerate their idol worship; he himself burned incense to those gods.

Although God pronounced judgment on Solomon for his idolatry, yet He showed mercy on him for his father David's sake. He left to Rehoboam one tribe because of His promise to David and for Jerusalem's sake (11:13).

The words yoke, whips, and scorpions (12:14) symbolize servitude. Apparently Solomon had extracted heavy taxes and required rigorous service from the people to support his luxurious living.

"For the cause was from the LORD" (12:15) tells us plainly that God brought judgment as He determined was necessary.

Principles and Applications

Apostasy

1. Disregard for God's clear commands always results in failure (11:1, 2). Solomon knew but disregarded God's message to him. The first step in the downward course seems to have been his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. Apostasy begins with small acts of disobedience and, if not repented of, will continue into greater and bolder evils.

2. Failure to guard social relationships results in tragedy (11:2, 4). This makes the choice of a marriage partner an especially serious matter. This choice sets the course for the rest of one's life. First you make the choice, and then the choice makes you.

3. Neglecting the good eventually leads to pursuing the evil (11:4, 5). Solomon grew lax in the worship of the true God because his focus had shifted to the love of his many wives. He had much knowledge, but it did not benefit him or govern his conduct. Neglect to fill our lives with things that are good and right will give room for the wrong to take root and grow. Similar consequences will follow for all who neglect to choose and establish right patterns of living.

Judgment

4. Refusing to heed God's warnings results in continued failure (11:10). God knows our tendencies and the ways in which we are inclined to fail. He is faithful in warning those who begin to turn in the wrong direction. Those warnings call for immediate attention and corrective measures.

5. A heart that turns from God falls under His anger and judgment (11:9-11). A good beginning does not ensure a good ending. Though one has enjoyed God's blessing and favor, he will lose that if he changes course. The great good that someone may have accomplished earlier in life will not immunize him from judgment or outweigh his evil deeds if he goes astray later.

6. God withdraws the blessing from those who turn from Him (11:11, 12). People who choose to do wrong often fail to consider the loss that will result from their choices. The blessing of God that follows obedience is of immeasurable value. That blessing is lost when one chooses a course away from God.

Rebellion

7. Our course of travel as parents strongly affects the path of our children (12:4). Rehoboam's frame of reference was Solomon's example of luxurious living and self-indulgence. We as parents are sowing seeds of influence by our example, which will produce a harvest in the choices of our children.

8. Disregarding the counsel of godly older men leads to failure (12:12-14). As we reach out for counsel, we should give more serious consideration to the voice of men whose godly character and righteous life show

that they are practicing what they profess. We risk failure when we experiment with the untested ideas set forth by those who lack experience. 9. Choosing wrong associates leads to further failure (12:14). Absorbed by self-interest, Rehoboam was unable to discern that the counsel of his peers was unwise. The advice of carnal associates will reflect their wrong thinking. Desire to please such friends creates strong pressure to ignore God's Word.

10. The failure of one person affects countless others (12:16, 17, 19). The people looked to Rehoboam for spiritual leadership into a better future, but selfish interests were ruling his life.

When a church is no longer unified by the Spirit of God, organizational disunity will follow as it did when Solomon failed. The failure of one church member, parent, or church leader is never confined to that person. A ripple effect of negative influence spreads in ever widening circles with potential to dishearten the faithful or harden the sinner.

Important Teachings

1. Disregard for God's clear commands always results in failure (11:1, 2).
2. Failure to guard social relationships results in tragedy (11:2, 4).
3. Neglecting the good eventually leads to pursuing the evil (11:4, 5).
4. Refusing to heed God's warnings results in continued failure (11:10).
5. A heart that turns from God falls under His anger and judgment (11:9-11).
6. God withdraws the blessing from those who turn from Him (11:11, 12).
7. Our course of travel as parents strongly affects the path of our children (12:4).
8. Disregarding the counsel of godly older men leads to failure (12:12-14).
9. Choosing wrong associates leads to further failure (12:14).
10. The failure of one person affects countless others (12:16, 17, 19).

Answers to Questions

1. What downward steps led to Solomon's failure?

Solomon's marriage to heathen women in disobedience to God was the first step. His worship of idols was the next step. Spiritual failure be-

came reality as his love of women displaced his love for God. Both of these things happened because Solomon did not heed the warnings of God, who had appeared unto him twice.

2. Why do people disobey God's Word in spite of the warnings about the tragic results?

Carnal men love the easy life of following the course of least resistance. They indulge the flesh and yield to the pressures of the moment, not considering the loss of God's favor and the final judgment they will face. They may consider themselves strong and able to withstand temptations to greater sins, not realizing that yielding in small ways will weaken them and make them susceptible to those greater sins.

3. How does carnal living lead one into deception and bondage?

Carnal appetites are never satisfied; they constantly cry out for more. Our deceptive fallen nature believes that fleshly indulgence will bring satisfaction, but Solomon discovered that such a life brings only "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Promising fulfillment, Satan lures people deeper and deeper into sin, only to leave them hopelessly bound in their lusts and addictions.

4. What reasons did God give for pronouncing judgment on Solomon?

Solomon had disobeyed the Lord by going after other gods (11:10). He had not kept God's covenant and His statutes (11:11). God had expressly told Solomon that His blessings were contingent upon obedience (1 Kings 3:13, 14; 9:4-9).

5. How can we avoid spiritual neglect and failure?

We must take God's warnings seriously. Each of us is a candidate for failure; our carnal nature can deceive us into thinking we can sin and not be adversely affected. We must continually read God's Word to benefit from the examples there of both those who failed and those who succeeded. We must understand and take seriously the danger of a careless, casual attitude.

6. Why did Rehoboam answer the people as he did?

Rehoboam lacked experience in leadership, but any person newly placed in authority will face that. Another factor was his father's self-indulgent example, which Rehoboam said he intended to follow and intensify. Perhaps the most decisive factor was that Rehoboam followed wrong counsel, even though he had access to wise counsel.

7. What spiritual consequences followed the rebellion of the ten tribes?

Since the ten tribes did not consider spiritual values when they rebelled, they opened the way for the idolatry established by Jeroboam. They separated themselves from the worship of God at Jerusalem. They distanced themselves from the spiritual legacy of the house of David, rejecting the God he had obeyed and worshiped.

8. What factors can make us vulnerable to spiritual failure?

Failures of the preceding generation will leave us vulnerable, but we can benefit from the wise counsel of godly people, as Rehoboam could have done. Failure to follow known truth will set us on a course away from God. A rebellious spirit will cloud our spiritual vision and leave us in confusion as to what is right

Summarizing the Lesson

When Solomon died, he left behind a discontented people and a foolish son who soon lost more than half of the kingdom. Solomon's failure had affected his son, Rehoboam. Their combined influence had a negative effect on all Israel. No one can disobey God's commands without reaping a multiplied harvest of loss in his own life and in the lives of those under his influence.

Think before you act. Others are watching.

Research Guide

1. Read 1 Samuel 8:10-18, where Samuel warned Israel about how they could expect to fare under the rule of a king.
2. Read Ecclesiastes 2 and 1 Kings 4:22-28 for a glimpse into Solomon's luxurious life and earthly pursuits.