



STORY

The Kingdom Divided - I Kings 12-14

TEACHER PRAYER

I thank You Lord that You have given me, Your servant, the privilege of declaring Your Truth to little children. Help me, Oh Lord, to let Your Truth shine forth as a lamp for the children, lighting their way through this sin-darkened world. I pray that You will fill all of us with Your Spirit that we may live in joyful and heartfelt obedience to You and Your Word. Your name may be glorified through us. In the name of our Savior Jesus we pray. Amen

VOCABULARY

Scourge (12:11) - whip with knots or hard objects fastened to the lashes

The River (14:15) - the Euphrates

Tirzah (14:17) - the capital city of Israel at the time

High Places (14:23) - places for pagan worship

OUTER AIM

God's kingdom of Israel is divided

INNER AIM

Disobedience to God has dire consequences

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 1, pp 334-340)

Solomon was blessed - Solomon was rich - Solomon was wise - but Solomon was also disobedient to God. His prosperity and wisdom were sacrificed on the altars of idols.

Solomon's "wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God..." (I Kings 11:4)

"Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, 'Because you have done his, and have not kept My covenant and My Statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.'" (I Kings 11:11 also read vs. 1-3, 12 and 13)

Solomon had many enemies. One from among his own administration was Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been a servant of Solomon. He was very industrious and Solomon had made him "the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph." (11:28)

It appears that he was generally well liked among the people. Now it happened that the prophet Ahijah revealed to Jeroboam that because of Solomon's disobedience the LORD revealed that He would tear the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon and divide it in two. The prophet Ahijah further announced to Jeroboam that he was chosen to rule over the ten tribes of Israel. To Solomon's son (Rehoboam) "I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there." (I Kings 11:36) (Though the house of Benjamin is not always mentioned, it is generally considered part of Judah.)

When Solomon became aware of God's promise to Jeroboam through the prophet, he tried to kill Jeroboam. Jeroboam fled to Egypt and was there until the death of Solomon. 12:1-24

Rehoboam was the one and only son recognized by God's word as the legitimate heir to the throne. He, therefore, became king after Solomon. The people contacted Jeroboam notifying him that Solomon was dead and Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

Jeroboam and a delegation of the people met with Rehoboam urging him to lighten the burdens on the people which Solomon had enforced. If an agreement could be reached, they promised to serve Rehoboam. As a result, Rehoboam sought counsel from the elders of the people. They urged gentleness and kindness toward the people promising that the people would respond with loyal dedication and service.

Rehoboam stubbornly rejected the counsel of the elders and rather sought out the advice of those with whom he had grown up. They advised stern and harsh treatment of the people even more severe than that of his father Solomon. Rehoboam accepted their advice and advised the people accordingly. The people of the northern tribes reacted by revolting against Rehoboam severing all ties with Judah and made Jeroboam king over the ten northern tribes which were known then as Israel.

Rehoboam sought to assemble an army from the houses of Judah and Benjamin to attempt to force Israel under his rule but was advised by a man of God, "Thus says the LORD 'You shall not go up nor fight'" (12:24) 12:25-33

Jeroboam settled in as king of Israel. Yet, something bothered him. Jerusalem remained the center of worship for all the people of both Judah and Israel. He feared that continued contact with Judah could easily erode the loyalty of the people which he enjoyed. Therefore, he determined that he would establish places of worship in Israel—one at Bethel (about 12 miles north of Jerusalem) and one at Dan (about 100 miles north of Jerusalem). What kind of worship would Jeroboam establish? He made calves of gold and said to the people, "Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt." Before these idols at shrines and high places, priests were appointed who were not of the house of Levi to offer sacrifices on the altars. "And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth."

Jeroboam's son became extremely ill. What should he do? He decided to disguise his wife so that they wouldn't recognize her and send her—where else but—to Shiloh to the prophet of the one true God, Ahijah. Ahijah had a message from the LORD for Jeroboam. "You have done more evil than all who were before you." As a result, the house of Jeroboam would be taken away as one takes out the garbage. As for his sick son, "when your feet enter the city, the child shall die." Nevertheless, the LORD makes it clear to Jeroboam that out of all in his house in this young child "there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel." Beyond that, the LORD foretells the destiny of Israel through the prophet Elijah in vss. 15-16. This came to pass through the invasion and captivity by the Assyrians some time later.

As for Rehoboam who ruled in Judah, he and the people also did evil. They too, "built for themselves high places, sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree." (14:23 and 24) Their dedication to the LORD waned and their weakness was obvious. Their enemies looted the house of the LORD of its treasures taking "everything away."

STUDENT PRAYER

I thank You Lord for Your Word of Truth and for pastors and teachers whom You have called to bring Your Words to us. Fill us with Your Spirit that we may avoid all that is against Your Word. So move us to walk with You in your Word in all that we say and do. Thus we pray Your name will be glorified through us and many will see Your salvation and walk with us in obedience and love to You.

PRESENTATION

Disobedience to God always has serious consequences: It affects our relationship with God It may offend others, that is, lead them into the trap of sin It may contribute to stifling the labors of His kingdom. Above everything, it may give people occasion to ridicule rather than to respect the name of God and worship him.

You may take each of the persons mentioned in our lesson who were disobedient to God and examine how the above four points applied to their lives. (You might include Solomon with Jeroboam and Rehoboam because of his obvious contribution to the sad state of affairs outlined in our lesson).

Discuss the sad state of affairs that results when those called to be leaders in spiritual matters mislead the people. As in the days of Israel and Judah, disobedience to God and the disregard of His Truth today also results in the people making their own religion or accepting something which is not of God and therefore harmful which could destroy one's relationship with God and eternal life.

APPLICATION

Because of our sinful flesh we are all prone to disobey God in our thoughts, words and deeds. Each of us, however, by God's grace has His Spirit in us. Because of God's Spirit in us, we are able to spot evil and root it out of our lives through repentance and faith in His forgiving love in Christ Jesus. The unbelieving world around us together with Satan and our sinful flesh are continually trying to tempt us to disobey God and to walk the way of evil. As we walk with the Spirit of God, we walk righteously to His glory and for our own good and blessing.

Disobedience to God is always harmful. Repeat the four points from the presentation section in application to us personally. Use examples of disobedience to God from the lives of children to show how seriously it affects one's relationship with other people and above all, with God. Example: Disobedience to parents, teachers, laws; lying etc. Repentance is the way to cast sin out of our lives. Describe how true repentance is healing for our soul: admitting one's guilt to ourselves, to others involved, to Christian friends and/or to parents and above all to God. We must be truly sorry for our sins not merely sorry that we "got caught." We will make amends in any way we can to correct the wrong and accept the assurance that we are truly forgiven through the forgiving love of God earned for us by Christ Jesus our Savior. We will praying earnestly for strength to avoid such sins in the future.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Proverbs 15:1 - A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Matthew 4:10 - You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve

Deuteronomy 5:7 - You shall have no other gods before Me.

Psalms 119:105 - Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Galatians 5: 16 - Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh

HYMN CHOICES

Lord Keep Us Steadfast In Thy Word - TLH #261

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord - TLH #462

Stand Up! Stand Up For Jesus - TLH #451

Fight The Good Fight With All Thy Might - TLH #447