

The Kingdom Is Divided

1 Kings 11:26-40; 12:1-24

MEMORY VERSE

1 KINGS 12:15

“For the turn of affairs was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A small stuffed animal and a blindfold.

As many “Obedience Game” templates as the number of children in your class, construction paper, contact paper and buttons.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Decisions, Decisions!

In today’s lesson we will be learning about listening to good advice and bad advice and what happens when we listen to bad advice. We have to make choices and decisions all of the time. Our friends may not always give us good advice. We need to learn how to listen to the Lord.

Read off the following questions to your class and ask for answers from the children.

1. Bobby saved some money to buy a really special video game. But, Jimmy asked Bobby to borrow some money so he could buy something he really wanted. Bobby thought about lying and saying that he spent the money already on something else. What do you think is the right thing for Bobby to do?
2. Ashley never really liked math very much so she asked her best friend Kathy if she would sit next to her during the big test and let her see her answers. What do you think is the right thing for Kathy to do?

3. Billy and Josh were really good friends. One day they were playing during recess at school. A group of boys came up to them and asked Josh to play with them, but made fun of Billy and said they didn't want him to play. What do you think is the right thing for Josh to do?

4. Sabrina moved into a new house and met some new girls on the street. They said they would be her friend if she went and stole some candy for them. What do you think is the right thing for Sabrina to do?

After the children have given you answers go back over each question and change the last phrase to "What would Jesus do?" Emphasize that it does not matter what we think or what our friends think, what matters is what Jesus thinks about a situation.

LESSON TIME!

When Solomon became King of Israel, he was a good king—he led the people in the ways of God. God told the people of Israel that if they would obey Him and follow all of His commandments and instructions, He would dwell with them and would bless them. And God did just that. He greatly blessed Solomon and the nation of Israel.

As the years passed, however, Solomon forgot his promises to God. As we saw in our last lesson, he allowed the influence of his many wives to draw him away from the one true God and into the worship of false gods and idols. The people of his kingdom followed their king into the same sin and the nation spiraled downward to their own destruction, losing the blessings God had promised to those who would follow in His ways.

Disobedience brings consequences. In our lesson today, we will see a large portion of the people of Israel will break away to make their own country. Brother will turn against brother and family against family. The people of Israel will begin to fight against one another! None of this had to happen. If only the king and the people would have remained faithful to the Lord! Sin destroys our relationship with God and with other people. **Disobedience brings consequences.**

1 KINGS 11:26-28

Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.

And this is what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the City of David his father.

The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph.

Jeroboam was a son of one of Solomon's officials. Solomon was impressed with Jeroboam and the way he did his work and placed him in charge of the labor force of the house of Joseph--a position of responsibility within the kingdom. We read he was a "mighty man of valor." He had a good reputation and was a good warrior. He was strong and may have even served in the military. We also read that he was industrious, meaning he was an energetic, hard worker. By all accounts, Jeroboam was a good man. Let's find out what made a man like Jeroboam rebel against King Solomon.

1 KINGS 11:29-32

Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field.

Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces.

And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you

'(but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel),

When Jeroboam was going into the country, a prophet of God named Ahijah met him. Ahijah took off his new coat and tore it into twelve pieces to signify the twelve tribes of Israel. (Note to teacher: You could bring an old piece of cloth and tear it into twelve pieces as a visual example for the children of what took place). He said that God was going to divide Solomon's vast kingdom. God would give Jeroboam ten tribes to rule as king. Solomon's son would rule over only one tribe to honor David and to keep the promise God gave to David to continue his family.

We see the rebellion of Jeroboam against Solomon was all part of God's plan. Just as God told Solomon (remember, our last lesson?), the kingdom was going to be torn from him. Sin has sad consequences. God wants to bless us so much, but when we

disobey, His love will move Him to discipline us that we might turn back to Him and learn from our mistakes. **Disobedience brings consequences.**

1 KINGS 11:33

'because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.

Solomon and the people of his kingdom were worshipping the false gods of the surrounding nations. They were not obeying and following God's ways like they had promised to do. If someone as wise as King Solomon could end up turning away from the Lord, how much more should we be on guard that we never turn away!

Do you suppose the influence of Solomon's wives, drawing Solomon away to worship their gods, happened overnight or slowly over a period of time? Slowly, the things of this world can creep into our lives and take our focus off of Jesus. Let us commit to keeping our eyes on the Lord that we might enjoy the blessings of those that walk in His ways. **Disobedience brings consequences.**

1 KINGS 11:34-36

'However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes.

'But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you; ten tribes.

'And to his son 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.

God had promised Solomon that he would rule during his lifetime because of his father David's obedience; therefore, He would take away the kingdom from Solomon's son. He would leave a small part because of David and because of the city of Jerusalem, which carries His name.

God is always faithful to His promises. He promised David that the Messiah (Jesus) would be one of his descendants; therefore, the descendants of David could not be completely cut off. He also promised Solomon that he would be able to rule over the entire kingdom all of his life--because of David's faithfulness and obedience.

Unfortunately, even at this late time, we do not see that Solomon repented or turned from his ways. It's possible everything would have been reversed had Solomon renewed his relationship with God, but sin had hardened Solomon's heart and blinded his eyes.

1 KINGS 11:37-39

'So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel.

'Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.

'And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.'"

God tells Jeroboam that he will become king over Israel. God makes a promise that if Jeroboam will obey God and follow Him like David did that he will be with him and will make him a great and lasting king. David's descendants will be humbled because of their sin but not forever.

We have been given the same promise that Jeroboam received—faith and obedience brings blessing. Let us choose today to serve the Lord.

1 KINGS 11:40-43

Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

When Solomon heard about this, he tried to kill Jeroboam but Jeroboam fled to Egypt for protection. Sadly, Solomon thought the answer was to kill Jeroboam. He did not recognize that God was judging his sins. His heart was hard, and he did not turn from his ways.

1 KINGS 12:1-2

And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king.

So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt),

After Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, went to Shechem for the Israelites to crown him as their king. Jeroboam heard about Solomon dying so he returned home from Egypt. At this time, the kingdom was still one.

1 KINGS 12:3-5

that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

"Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you."

So he said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me." And the people departed.

Note, Jeroboam did try to take the kingdom from Rehoboam. The people recognized him as a leader, and he probably could have begun a rebellion since King Solomon had made the people's life very difficult. It seems that King Solomon had made the people work very hard and pay a lot of money for all of his grand building projects.

Instead, Jeroboam and all of Israel went to Solomon's son, Rehoboam, to talk to him, to just ask him to lighten the burdens that were placed on them. They told him that if he would work with them and help them, they would be loyal to him and would serve him as their king. Rehoboam told them to come back in three days for his answer.

1 KINGS 12:6-7

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, "How do you advise me to answer these people?"

And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

Rehoboam sought the advice of the elders who had given advice to Solomon. The elders gave good advice. They said that if you work with them and give them a fair and favorable answer, they will work with you and will follow you as their king.

It is good to listen to those who are older. The Lord has blessed parents and grandparents with understanding that comes from many years of experience. They understand things that you do not. If you listen to their advice and glean from their experience, you can avoid many problems and pitfalls.

1 KINGS 12:8-11

But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.

And he said to them, "What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us'?"

Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us'; thus you shall say to them: 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist!

'And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!'"

Rehoboam did not like the advice of the elders. He listened to his friends who told him, "Who do they think they are? You are the one in charge here. Why let them tell you what to do? Put them in their place. Tell them if you think my father was tough, I can be tougher than he was."

Rehoboam's young friends gave him advice that was completely the opposite of the elder's advice. It may be tempting to listen to our friends rather than the wisdom of someone older. Be careful! Those who are older usually know best. Rehoboam will learn the hard way: it is best to listen to our elders.

1 KINGS 12:12-14

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day."

Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him;

and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"

Instead of taking the advice of the elders who had experience with the people, he did what his friends told him to do. He told them, "I am the king. I have the power. How dare you tell me what to do. I can be rougher than my father. He chastised you with a whip; I will chastise you with scourges if you don't obey me."

People who are leaders can use their power for good towards the people they oversee, or they can use it for evil. A good leader will be a leader who is willing to be a servant to the people. Jesus is the perfect example of a good leader. Unfortunately, Rehoboam is an example of a bad leader.

Listening To Good Advice

The object of this game is to demonstrate how hard it is to sometimes listen to the Lord's voice when there are so many voices around you in the world. Rehoboam was given some very bad advice in our story. How important is it for us to listen for the Lord?

You will need a small stuffed animal (or any object will do) and a blindfold. Ask for a volunteer. Blindfold them. Tell them that their goal is to find the stuffed animal. Choose another child to be the Lord's voice. They will try to instruct the blindfolded child where to go to find the stuffed animal. The rest of the class will be the world's voices. They will give bad directions on purpose to try to keep the blindfolded child from finding the stuffed animal. Allow the children to play for a few minutes and switch roles a few times if they would like to.

Have everyone sit in a circle and ask those children who were blindfolded to share what it was like to try to find the stuffed animal. Was it hard to listen to the right voice? Were they able to find it? How is this like listening to the right advice in our lives? It's not always easy. But, we can listen to our parents and grandparents, read our Bibles, and pray for wisdom.

1 KINGS 12:15-17

So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: "What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!" So Israel departed to their tents.

But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.

Because Rehoboam did not listen to the people, the kingdom was divided just like the prophet of God said it would be, which fulfilled the word of the Lord. The people told him, "What does it profit us to follow you? Only your family will profit. We do not have to do what you say; we'll take care of ourselves and go to our own homes. We're out of here!"

Only the Israelites living in Judah continued to follow Solomon's son. There will now be the nation of Israel (the northern 10 tribes) and the nation of Judah.

1 KINGS 12:18-19

Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the revenue; but all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem.

So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

The king sent out the man in charge of collecting taxes, but the people stoned him, rebelling against Rehoboam. The king was barely able to flee to Jerusalem with his life.

1 KINGS 12:20

Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

The ten tribes of Israel made Jeroboam king over their new nation. Only the tribe of Judah and house of Benjamin remained with Solomon's son, Rehoboam, just like God had said would happen through his prophet.

Jeroboam never tried to take over or to set himself up as king. He waited on the Lord, and the Lord did as He said He would do. Unfortunately, as we will see in future lessons, Jeroboam did not obey the Lord for very long.

1 KINGS 12:21-24

And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

"Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying,

'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me." ' " Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD.

Rehoboam called together a large army to fight the rebellion, but the prophet of God told them that this was the Lord's doing because of the disobedience of the people. He told them not to fight against their brothers and to go home. So they obeyed the word of the Lord and went home.

We see the tragic fate of the once prosperous and blessed kingdom under Solomon. As a result of the king and the peoples disobedience, sin, and the worship of foreign gods, the kingdom became divided into two smaller nations--there would never again be a united Israel. In His love, God had called out to King Solomon and the people to turn back to Him. They chose instead to continue in their backsliding.

When we put people and the things of this world ahead of God, we sin. God wants first place in our hearts. He wants us to experience the blessings and fulfillment of walking in obedience and harmony with Him. If we turn away from God, our lives become empty and miserable. We no longer experience His blessings. Instead we will find, **when we disobey God, we will be disciplined.**

The Obedience Game

Using the enclosed template make enough copies for the children in your class. Everyone can make a game board even though two players will play on one board. Cut out the game board and glue onto a piece of construction paper or cardstock. Cut around the edge of the construction paper. Using contact paper, laminate the game board. You will need one button for each child as a game piece.

Have the children form pairs. The object of the game is to be the first player to have their game piece land on each of the eight squares and give an example of obedience for each square to win. Place the game board at least 2 feet from the players (they can play on the floor if they like). Have the first player “pitch” their button onto the board. If they land on the first square they can give an example of obedience in the area listed. For example, “chores” - the child would give an example of how they might obey with their household chores. Then they will wait for their next turn when they will try to land on square 2. If they do not land in the right square then they will have to wait until their next turn.

After the children have played for a while have them share with one another some examples of obeying in each of the categories. Encourage them to take the game board home and show their family how to play.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to learn from the bad choices that we read about in the Bible and to choose to follow the Lord with all of their hearts. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

Template - Obedience Game

