

Rehoboam and Jeroboam: Leading the Nations into Sin

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1–2)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rehoboam’s foolish actions divided the kingdom.2. Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam failed to follow God’s laws and led the Israelites into sin.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is a jealous God.2. God wants us to follow Him wholeheartedly.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prepare our hearts to seek the Lord by trusting Him, leaning on His understanding, and acknowledging Him.2. Make wise decisions in accordance with God’s principles.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Jeroboam and Rehoboam’s Rise to Power
- B. Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry
- C. Rehoboam’s Rule over Judah

Life Application

1. Prepare Our Hearts to Seek the Lord
2. Making Wise Decisions

Memory Verse

Conclusion: We need to learn from Jeroboam and Rehoboam’s failures. Learn to make wise decisions based on biblical principles and set our hearts to seek God, so that we can draw closer to Him in every decision and action that we take.

Introduction

Because of Solomon and the Israelites' disobedience, the kingdom of Israel was split in two during the reign of the following kings: Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam was Solomon's son, while Jeroboam was appointed by Solomon as officer over one of his labor forces. Unfortunately, neither walked in David's ways, but instead continued the nation's spiritual decline that had begun in Solomon's reign.

A. Jeroboam and Rehoboam's Rise to Power

1. Jeroboam

When he is first introduced, the Bible says 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" (1 Kgs 11:28). But why did Jeroboam come to rebel against the king (v. 26)? Let's read 1 Kings 11:29–40.

Ahijah's proclamation to Jeroboam is quite dramatic. God was planning to divide the kingdom of Israel, and part of it would go to Jeroboam. While David had been willing to wait for God's timing, though, Jeroboam immediately "rebelled against the king" (1 Kgs 11:26). So Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, prompting him to flee to Egypt (v. 40).

2. Rehoboam

Solomon appointed his son Rehoboam as his successor. Unfortunately, Rehoboam did not have his father's wisdom. Let's read 1 Kings 12:4–15. Rehoboam received advice from two different groups of people, but he didn't think through the advice carefully. The advice offered by the older group was wiser, but he instead followed his peers. He chose to follow what was good for himself, not what was good for his people.

Let's read what happened in 1 Kings 12:17–19. Because of his rash decision, the people were so angered that they stoned Rehoboam's taskmaster Adoram to death.

Rehoboam's rash reply had an immediate and lasting effect: the division of Israel. The people were so angered that Rehoboam became afraid and began to mobilize his forces. The houses of Judah and Benjamin assembled under Rehoboam, ready to fight their own brethren. However, the Lord stepped in and sent word through His prophet. They obeyed God and managed to avoid civil war, but this event marked the beginning of the kingdom's division, one that lasted for centuries.

While it's clear that like David, Jeroboam and Rehoboam were chosen by God for a specific purpose, it is also clear that unlike David, neither of them walked according to God's commands. Let's first look at what actions Jeroboam took as king.

B. Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry

Rather than fulfilling God's promise as a king who followed God's command, Jeroboam decided to do whatever he could to secure his position as king. He didn't want his authority as king to be undermined, as he was not of David's lineage. As a result, he didn't want his people to go to Solomon's temple to offer sacrifices to the Lord. His choice was a political one. Unfortunately, his choice also meant disobeying the Lord. His first step was to choose Shechem as his new capital, and he set about rebuilding and fortifying it (1 Kgs 12:25). But how did he disobey God?

1. Jeroboam builds two golden idols

Let's read 1 Kings 12:26–33. Clearly, his heart didn't follow God. According to the laws, all Israelites were required to travel to worship God in Jerusalem three times each year (Deut 16:16). During the rest of the year, other worship services were conducted in the tribal areas by priests and Levites, who lived throughout the land.

Jeroboam didn't only tell his people that it was too much trouble to travel to Jerusalem. He also, rather shrewdly, placed two golden idols in Bethel and Dan for the people to worship. Bethel was on the main road that led to Jerusalem, which would have enticed Israelites from the north to worship there instead of travel all the way to Jerusalem.

2. Jeroboam changes God's holy days

Let's read 1 Kings 12:32–33. Instead of observing the Feast of the Tabernacle in the seventh month, Jeroboam instituted an alternate feast in the eighth month, a time that "he had devised in his own heart." It's clear that Jeroboam was not acting in accordance with God's will.

3. Jeroboam appoints priests

God had specifically commanded that only people from the tribe of Levi could be priests (Num 3:10). Let's read what Jeroboam did in 1 Kings 13:33–34. Jeroboam's sin of appointing priests on his own was so serious that this led to his entire house being cut off from the earth.

The Result of Jeroboam's Sins

The Bible teaches us that adding or taking away from God's words is a very serious sin. Despite being appointed by the Lord, Jeroboam changed God's commands and led the kingdom to stray in their faith. As a result, God punished him severely.

When Jeroboam's son grew ill, he asked his wife to disguise herself and go to Ahijah, the prophet who had first announced Jeroboam's kingship. When she went, however, the Lord told Ahijah exactly who she was, and Ahijah announced God's judgment on the house of Jeroboam. Let's read 1 Kings 14:7–16. What did Jeroboam do, and how did God punish him?

Jeroboam...	So God...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did more evil than those before him (v. 9)• Made other gods and molded images (v. 9)• Cast God behind his back (v. 9)• Led Israel into sin (vv. 15–16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cut off Jeroboam from Israel (v. 10)• Cut off Jeroboam's family and all who belonged to him (vv. 10–11, 14)• Took away Jeroboam's child (v. 13)• Uprooted Israel (v. 15)• Gave Israel up (v. 16)

Jeroboam's sins were made all the worse because he led an entire nation into sin with him. God did place some blame on the people, as He said that the Israelites "made their wooden images, provoking the LORD to anger" (1 Kgs 14:15). However, as their king, Jeroboam had the responsibility of setting an example and following God's commands. Instead, he encouraged them to follow pagan practices, so God punished both him and the Israelites. In the end, Jeroboam died after twenty-two years of rule, upon which he was buried with his ancestors.

C. Rehoboam's Rule over Judah

Although it was Rehoboam's actions that divided the nation, the Bible says that God was with him for three years. This was in part because Jeroboam rejected the Levites as priests, driving them to the southern kingdom where Rehoboam ruled. Let's read 2 Chronicles 11:16–17.

From these verses, we can see that the beginning of Rehoboam's reign was blessed by God. But unfortunately, Rehoboam followed in his father's footsteps and sinned by taking numerous wives for himself (Deut 17:17; 2 Chr 11:21). Rehoboam also forsook God's laws as Solomon had.

The Sins of the Southern Kingdom

The Bible says that "when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel along with him" (2 Chr 12:1). Let's turn to 1 Kings 14:22–24 and list out the ways the southern kingdom sinned against God.

- Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 22)
- They provoked Him to jealousy with their sins (v. 22)
- They built high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images (v. 23)
- They followed the abominations of the nations that God had rejected (v. 24)

God had repeatedly warned the Israelites against following the pagan practices of the Gentile nations, but they had done exactly that, and fallen into their evil practices. And just as with Jeroboam and the northern kingdom, the Lord punished Rehoboam and his people for their sins. He sent Shemaiah the prophet to deliver His message.

The Result of Judah's Sins

Let's read 2 Chronicles 12:5–12. The Lord's proclamation upon Judah was less personal than the one that He gave to Jeroboam, but no less devastating. The Lord would give them up to another nation because of their sins. However, the reaction of Judah's leaders was very different. They humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous" (v. 6). Because of their humility, God changed their punishment. The nation wouldn't be taken entirely by Shishak, king of Egypt. However, the glory of their nation, God's temple, was completely ransacked by the Egyptians a mere five years after Solomon's death (1 Kgs 14:25–26). Considering the sheer amount of effort and construction that went into the temple, this was a huge tragedy.

Unfortunately, Rehoboam's life and rule was equally tragic, as the Bible records that "he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD" (2 Chr 12:14). He ruled over Judah for seventeen years and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David when he died.

Check for Understanding

- 1. How did Jeroboam learn of God's plans for him?** Ahijah approached him, tore his garment in twelve, and announced that God was going to divide the kingdom and that Jeroboam would rule over ten of the tribes.
- 2. What foolish decision did Rehoboam make, and what was the result?** He rejected the wise counsel of his elders and followed his peers' advice instead. The result was the division of Israel.
- 3. Why did Jeroboam set up the golden idols at Bethel and Dan?** He didn't want the people going to Jerusalem. It was for the purpose of strengthening his political power.
- 4. What happened at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign?** Jeroboam's rejection of the Levites drove the priests into Rehoboam's kingdom, leading to a stronger faith and God's presence in Judah for three years.

5. **What happened after the initial three years of Rehoboam's reign? What was the consequence?**
Rehoboam and the kingdom of Judah forgot God's laws and began to sin. As a result, God allowed Shishak, the king of Egypt, to ransack the temple a mere five years after Solomon's death.

Life Application

1. Prepare Our Hearts to Seek the Lord

Rehoboam's biggest failure was that "he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD" (2 Chr 12:14). In contrast, his grandfather David was described as a man after God's own heart. He was constantly seeking God throughout his life. What does it mean, then, to seek the Lord? To answer this question, let's first turn to Proverbs 3:5–6. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

a. Trust in the Lord

When he decided to set up golden idols for the Israelites to worship, Jeroboam was showing a lack of trust in God. Rehoboam had a more legitimate claim to the kingdom, so he was concerned about establishing and strengthening his political power. His logic was based on the reasoning of the world, not on God's reasoning.

When we follow our own understanding, as Jeroboam did, we rely on our own perceptions. But because we are human, and limited, we become filled with anxiety, fear, worry, and doubt. On the other hand, if we fully trust God and rest on His understanding and wisdom, we are allowing Him to direct our paths. Therefore, to seek the Lord requires that we first trust in Him. Everything else will fall into place when we do.

b. Lean not on your own understanding

The second step to seeking the Lord is learning to rely on His wisdom, rather than on our own. This is difficult because His actions are often incomprehensible to us. We don't like doing things without knowing the reason why! Yet, many of God's commands are exactly that: doing things without understanding their purpose. Abraham experienced this when God told him to sacrifice Isaac. Likewise, Joseph had no idea why God allowed him to be sold into slavery until the day he met his brothers and saved them from the famine.

God has told us, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). This doesn't only mean that God's ways are beyond our understanding. This also means that because He is so much higher than us, His way is perfect. So, to seek Him, we should lean on God's understanding, not on our own.

c. In all your ways acknowledge Him

At the peak of his kingdom's prosperity, Rehoboam abandoned God, completely forgetting that it was God who had given Judah its success. He forgot to acknowledge God in all that he did. But what does it mean to "acknowledge" God? Another way of translating this word is to *perceive*, to *see*, or to *recognize*. This means that in everything we do, we need to recognize God's presence and power. For example, we are acknowledging God's grace when we say grace before our meals. We should learn to extend this acknowledgement to everything else that we do. When we learn to constantly see God's presence in our lives, we are less likely to sin, and more likely to seek Him.

Seeking the Lord requires a conscious and conscientious effort in focusing our minds and hearts upon Him. It involves effort. A lot of times, we don't bother making this effort because we are so preoccupied with the things of the world. Our physical desires often block our way. But God has promised to reward those who seek Him (Heb 11:6).

Survey: Does My Heart Seek God?

Take a moment to fill out the following survey. At the end, tally up your numbers on the following page, and then reflect on which areas you need to improve upon the most! *(Teachers: The survey has been placed on two separate pages at the end of this lesson so that you can print it out for your students. A follow-up question has been included in their homework.)*

2. Making Wise Decisions

Learning to make wise decisions is an important step in our spirituality; Rehoboam failed to do so, and the kingdom became divided as a result. We make choices every day in our lives, some less important, some with lasting effects on our lives. How should we use our time or money? What school should we apply to? What job do we want? Wise choices give birth to wise results, but foolish decisions can be detrimental not only to our life, but also to our faith. So, it is important that we learn to choose wisely according to God's standards. Generally, there are two ways that we can find wise counsel.

a. Wise counsel from our friends

It is often said that bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor 15:33). We should learn from Rehoboam's failures and try to surround ourselves with people who affect our spirituality in a positive way. We need to seek people who raise up our faith, not people who drag it down. It is, of course, easiest to find these people at church.

We may hesitate to ask for help, but if you ever need help in making a decision, it is always a good idea to ask your RE teachers, local ministers, deacons, or an elder at church for help. It may feel awkward, but they can most likely offer a lot of wisdom that you wouldn't think of, because of their years of experience and spiritual growth! Overall, the most important thing is that we surround ourselves with friends and mentors who are willing to tell us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear.

b. A heart guided by God's wisdom

Have any of you ever been asked for advice? For example, I might ask *[student name]* for advice on whether or not I should buy a new laptop. What kinds of questions would you ask me to allow you to be able to advise me better? *(Allow students to answer. Examples may be: Can you afford it? Do you need it for work or for play?)* When we make decisions about big purchases, there are a lot of factors that we learn to consider, whether consciously or unconsciously. We try to balance cost, effectiveness, value, and so on.

We apply similar principles to other decisions in our lives, too. What kinds of big choices have you made recently, and what factors did you consider when you made your decision? *(Allow students to share. Examples may be which electives to take at school, whether to pursue a hobby or sport, or maybe whether to make a big purchase with their allowance.)* Do you think you made a wise decision?

As God's children, making wise choices means learning to follow certain principles in our decision-making process. What principles do the following verses tell us to follow?

- Hebrews 12:2 (*Always look to Jesus and consider what He wants of you.*)
- 2 Corinthians 4:18 (*Always consider the consequences for your spiritual life.*)
- 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (*Choose the path of faith that leads you to the crown of righteousness.*)
- Matthew 7:13–14 (*Determine to follow the narrow path. It is always the more difficult choice, but it leads to life instead of destruction.*)

Making wise decisions is never easy. Neither Rehoboam nor Jeroboam were able to find the wisest path for their kingdoms, leading to disastrous results. This teaches us that it is often difficult for us to see the right path to take, especially when our faith is low. But the Lord has given us wise counsel in the form of our spiritual friends, God’s word, and the Holy Spirit. With all of these helpers at hand, all that we need to do is train ourselves to apply the principles of the Bible to our decisions, and learn to accept wise counsel from those around us. When we do so, then we will grow in wisdom. And whoever finds wisdom “finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD” (Prov 8:35).

Discussion

(Teachers: Depending on the size of the class, you may want to split them into groups. Have them discuss each student’s weakness as a group, and give them time to brainstorm different types of “wise counsel” for each other’s weaknesses.)

- Do you tend to try and find solutions on your own, even when the problems are too big for you to handle on your own?
- What specific area in your life do you need more wisdom in? Examples may be spending habits, school-related decisions, time management, etc.
- What kind of wise counsel can we share with each other for each area?

Memory Verse

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1–2)

Meaning

1. When we were baptized, we were raised with Christ. Therefore, we should act as Christ acted as well. This means seeking the things that are above, placing God as our priority in our daily decisions.
2. Setting our minds on things above means concentrating on our eternal rewards in heaven, rather than on the temporary things of the earth. The more we see life as Christ sees it, the more we will shine for Him and glorify Him.

Conclusion

Because of their failure to follow God’s laws, Jeroboam and Rehoboam continued the nation’s spiritual decline that had begun with Solomon. In his desire for political strength, Jeroboam led the Israelites into idolatry, while Rehoboam forgot God’s provision at the peak of his power. As a result, God enacted punishment on both the rulers and the Israelites themselves. We need to learn from their failures by making wise decisions based on biblical principles and setting our hearts to seek God, so that we can draw closer to Him in every decision and action that we take.

Lesson 12 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does it mean to set our minds on things above?
It means to concentrate on our eternal rewards in heaven, rather than on the temporary things of the earth.
2. "And he did _____, because he did not _____ his _____ to _____ the _____." (2 Chronicles 12:14)
evil, prepare, heart, seek, Lord
3. "_____ in the LORD with all your _____, and _____ not on your own _____; in all your ways _____ Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5–6)
Trust, heart, lean, understanding, acknowledge
4. What three major sins did Jeroboam commit?
He built golden idols to prevent the Israelites from going to Jerusalem; he changed God's holy days; he appointed priests of his own who were not Levites.
5. How did Rehoboam sin against the Lord? What was the result?
He multiplied many wives for himself and forsook God's laws when his kingdom was prosperous. As a result, the Lord allowed Solomon's temple to be completely ransacked by the Egyptians.
6. Name at least two important principles that we need to follow to make wise choices.
Look to Jesus and consider what He wants of us; always consider the consequences upon our spiritual life; choose the path of faith that leads to our crown of righteousness; and determine to follow the narrow path. It is always the more difficult choice, but it leads to life instead of destruction.
7. Based on the survey you did during class, in which area do you need to improve upon the most? Why do you think you struggle with this aspect of seeking God?
Personal answers.

Name: _____

Survey: Does My Heart Seek God?

Take a moment to fill out the following survey. At the end, tally up your numbers on the following page, and then reflect on which areas you need to improve upon the most!

Trust in the Lord									
When faced with a decision, the first thing I do is kneel down to pray and ask God for help.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I easily accept bad times and smile through them, knowing that God is still taking care of me.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
When in a financial, academic, or personal crisis, I accept that God is letting it happen for a reason.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Even when God doesn't immediately answer my prayers, I patiently wait for His answer.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Lean on God's Understanding									
When I realize what God wants me to do, I immediately follow His will.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I never question any of God's commands in the Bible and simply accept them as they are.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I prioritize spiritual wisdom and understanding, much more than academic or worldly knowledge.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
When the Bible doesn't make sense, I pray for wisdom and seek answers to my questions.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
Acknowledge God									
When something good happens, I immediately give thanks to God.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
If something bad happens, I recognize God's presence and reflect on whether He is disciplining me.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I am always thinking about whether my actions reflect Jesus Christ.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		
I always try to use words that will glorify God every time I open my mouth to speak.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Never</i>			<i>Sometimes</i>				<i>Always</i>		

Survey Score: Does My Heart Seek God?

Trust in the Lord: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is my instinct to trust in my own abilities rather than God’s power. I do not yet understand that God is all-powerful, and that He wants me to rely on Him, not on myself.
16 to 30	I find it easier to trust God when it is convenient for me, but I still sometimes wonder why He lets certain things happen.
≥ 31	I have experienced God’s care, and have learned to trust that everything is under His control. Whether I am faced with good times or bad, I know that He is taking care of me.

Lean on God’s Understanding: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is extremely difficult for me to do God’s will without seeing the reason why. When things don’t make sense, I’d much rather just do things my own way.
16 to 30	I know that sometimes God does things in ways that don’t make sense. Sometimes I accept this, but other times, I try to use my worldly knowledge to figure out how to proceed.
≥ 31	I know that no matter how illogical events may be to me, God’s way is perfect. It may be difficult at times for me to follow His will, but it is important to me that I at least try.

Acknowledge God: _____ /40

If my score is...	
≤ 15	It is easy for me to forget God’s presence in my life. I tend to attribute good things to my own abilities and bad things to poor luck. I do not yet understand that God is in control of everything, and that He wants me to remember how much He has given me.
16 to 30	I remember God during bad times, but sometimes forget Him during good times. I think of Him when making big decisions, but sometimes do or say things that do not glorify Him.
≥ 31	I often give thanks to God, both in good and bad times. I am always conscious of whether my actions or speech reflect Christ-like behavior and try to be a Christian 24/7.

Overall Score: _____ /120