

# SOLOMON, THE FAILED KING

## + SESSION OUTLINE

1. A divided heart leads to sin (1 Kings 11:4-8).
2. A rebellious heart receives judgment (1 Kings 11:9-13).
3. An arrogant heart results in division and strife (1 Kings 12:3-5,12-17).

Background Passage: 1 Kings 10–12

## + WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Sin begins in the heart, but its consequences affect others.

## + HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Solomon was a king whose reign was marked by prosperity and peace, but in the end, Solomon's sinful compromise led to the division of the kingdom. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke of Himself when He claimed "something greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). Whereas Solomon's sinful choices divided the kingdom, Christ's righteous submission to God established a new unity for God's people.

## + HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have been forgiven of all our sin through Christ, we proclaim the foolishness of relying on our own wisdom for salvation and lift up Jesus as the only hope.

# GROUP TIME

NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

**SETTING:** It's a dark time in the kingdom of Israel, but you wouldn't know it. The prosperity and fame of King Solomon had put him on the map. Foreign royalty had come to see for themselves both the lavish wealth and wisdom of Solomon. You'd think that with every blessing and provision, Solomon would have been living with a wholehearted devotion to God. But you'd be wrong. Dark days lay ahead for the king and his kingdom. But for all his wisdom, Solomon couldn't see that because he was focused on all the wrong things.

**INSTRUCT:** Ask groups of 3-4 to use the sidebar in their DDG to generate a list of some signs and symptoms of heart failure. You may want to point them to a website accessible on a mobile device for ideas (for example: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-failure/symptoms-causes/syc-20373142>).

**DISCUSS: Why is it dangerous to ignore the external symptoms of heart failure?** (this could lead to damage to the heart and other internal organs; this could result in a heart attack, extended hospitalization, bypass surgeries, pacemakers, pneumonia, and even death)

**TRANSITION:** The apostle Paul tells us that the events in the Bible, specifically the Old Testament, happened to serve as examples and warnings to us "that we might not desire evil as they did" (1 Cor. 10:6). Whenever we see the failure of someone in Scripture, his or her story speaks loudly to warn us away from that failure and to encourage us to run to Jesus for His help to walk in His grace. The tragic story of Solomon, at this point in his life, warns us to be serious about the signs of spiritual heart failure and not to ignore them when we see them in our own hearts.

# POINT 1

## A DIVIDED HEART LEADS TO SIN (1 KINGS 11:4-8).

**4** For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. **5** For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. **6** So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. **7** Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. **8** And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 11:4-8** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 4** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Solomon's downward trajectory began at **home**, directly **disobeying** God's word and having foreign wives, demonstrating a heart that was not **completely** devoted to the Lord.

**DISCUSS:** Why is it important that God's people obey His command not to marry unbelievers? (marrying an unbeliever has the increased potential of dividing your heart and leading you away from the Lord; believers joined in marriage can encourage one another in faithfulness; marriage is meant to be a picture of the gospel relationship between Christ and the church)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 5-8** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Not only did Solomon **passively** allow his many wives to turn his heart from the Lord, but he also enabled, provided for, and participated in the worship of false gods, taking **active** steps in doing **evil**.

**DISCUSS:** What steps can we take to help us avoid passive and active works of evil in our lives? (read God's Word regularly; obey God's Word; pray to the Lord regularly; invest relationally in your local church; listen to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit; pray for a humble spirit; be quick to repent)

**TRANSITION:** Once-wise Solomon had now become foolish, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight. And now he would face the consequences of his disobedience.

### NOTES

#### MILCOM

Milcom was an astral god (Zeph. 1:5), usually identified as the god Molech. The worship of Molech/Milcom involved child sacrifice, literally translated from the Hebrew as "pass through the fire to Molech" (KJV, Lev. 18:21; 2 Kings 23:10; see Lev. 20:2-5). Although the Lord finds child sacrifice detestable (Jer. 32:35), some Israelites offered their children to Molech and other false gods of Canaan (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 28:3; Ps. 106:37-38).

#### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"There are critical times of danger. After great services, honours, and consolations, we should stand upon our guard. Noah, Lot, David, and Solomon, fell in these circumstances. Satan is a footpad; a footpad will not attack a man in going to the bank, but in returning with his pocket full of money."<sup>1</sup>

-John Newton  
(1725-1807)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSE 4** / This verse is the summary indictment on Solomon's life. It directs us to the root of Solomon's failure and sets up the divine judgment and consequences we find in the rest of the chapter. This is a warning to us to guard our hearts against anything that would cause us to wander away from Christ (see Prov. 4:23).

We can assume that Solomon, as he advanced in years, began to rely on his own wisdom and set aside the biblical command for the king to "read in [the law] all the days of his life" (Deut. 17:19). One specific clue as to what contributed to Solomon's departure from the Lord was that his heart was in another place. His many "**wives turned away his heart after other gods.**" Solomon had ignored the commands of God for kings not to take many wives (Deut. 17:17) and for His people not to intermarry with foreign women outside of the covenant people of Israel (Deut. 7:3-4). Instead, he did both of these things and loved these pagan women deeply (1 Kings 11:2). Solomon's problem was, as Augustine of Hippo might have put it, a case of "disordered love."<sup>2</sup> He gave his affections, will, and desires to the women he had married more than he gave himself to the love of the Lord.

The second part of verse 4 makes a comparison between Solomon at this stage of his life and his father, "**David.**" Solomon had not lived up to the call and standard set by his great father, even though Solomon had amassed more wealth and expanded the kingdom far more than David had. Unlike David, who was a man after God's own heart to the end, Solomon's "**heart was not wholly true to the LORD.**" Solomon's heart was divided and unhealthy. The contrast between Solomon and David is remarkable because although David had sinned in very serious ways, he never was devoted to or worshiped false gods. All sin is idolatry on some level, but there is something significant and calculated about intentionally following other gods and leaving behind the one true God.

**VERSES 5-8** / Solomon "**went after**" the gods and idols of the nations. In other places in Scripture, the Hebrew word for this action is translated "walked" and is "used to denote a 'lifestyle choice' in the [Old Testament]."<sup>3</sup> The worship of false gods was strictly prohibited in the law (Ex. 20:3), but King Solomon made idolatry a defining characteristic of his waning days.

Verse 6 leaves no question as to the moral quality of Solomon's actions: "**Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD**" as he was no longer loyal to or wholly following the Lord. Here was a man with a heart divided between the Lord and the false gods of the nations, and no part of this division could be considered virtuous. If the one true God is not in first place in our lives, then we have to wonder where He is in our lives at all.

Verse 6 also includes the second time, in the space of three verses, that the writer of 1 Kings made the comparison between Solomon and David. We are meant to see the gap of character and wholeness that existed between these two men at this point. The tragedy of Solomon's divided heart would have broken his father's heart.

Verses 7-8 catalog some of the evil actions of Solomon's idolatry and give specific names and origins of false deities and their places of worship. By building "**a high place**" for the worship of these false gods, Solomon was elevating them in the eyes of the people and therefore teaching them to walk away from the Lord. By building one of these high places on a hill across from Jerusalem, Solomon was placing that center of worship for a false god in direct view of the city, providing a competing vision of the temple where God alone was to be worshiped. In many ways, Solomon was encouraging a universalism of sorts among Israel, similar to the modern belief that all roads lead to heaven. After all that God had done for Solomon, the tragedy of his abandonment of wholehearted devotion to and love for the Lord was great.

# POINT 2

## A REBELLIOUS HEART RECEIVES JUDGMENT

(1 KINGS 11:9-13).

**9** And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice

**10** and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.

**11** Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. **12** Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. **13** However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **1 Kings 11:9-13** from his or her Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 9-10** commentary to emphasize the Lord’s assessment of Solomon’s sins; then contrast the sinfulness of Solomon with the sinlessness of Jesus, the greater and better Solomon, the true King for God’s people (*the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

**ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #51:** *Sinlessness of Jesus:* While the Bible affirms the full **humanity** of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely **sinless** throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real **temptation** of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity’s, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 11-13** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

God would **discipline** Solomon, but because of His **covenant** promises to David, God’s judgment on Solomon was also governed by His **grace**.

**DISCUSS:** Read the verse on **PACK ITEM 13: SOLOMON, THE FOOLISH KING**, then ask: **Why does the Lord’s discipline of believers in Christ resemble that of Solomon and not Saul?** (like Solomon, believers are considered by God as part of His family; the Lord has promised that He will never leave nor forsake His children [Heb. 13:5]; the Holy Spirit permanently resides in believers; Solomon was included in the Lord’s covenant with David, while believers are included in the new covenant through the perfect work of Jesus Christ)

**TRANSITION:** The Lord was merciful in His consequences handed down to Solomon, but the next generation of Israel suffered for his sinful actions.

NOTES



## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 9-10** / The consequences of Solomon's evil deeds were about to be handed down. Relationally, **"the LORD was angry with Solomon."** Solomon's idolatrous actions had violated not only the charge given to him by his father, David (1 Kings 2:1-4), but also the very commandments of God (Ex. 20:2-5).

Solomon's actions in and of themselves were evil, but more importantly, Solomon was no longer inclined to worship, serve, adore, and prioritize the Lord. Therefore, the reason for God's anger against Solomon was that **"his heart had turned away from the LORD."** We should heed this indictment against Solomon because the same can be true in our lives. We can even do the right things and still have our hearts far from God, incurring His anger.

The writer goes on to emphasize Solomon's betrayal. The king hadn't turned his back on a foreign god but **"the LORD, the God of Israel,"** who led His people out of Egypt and inspired fear among the nations because of His mighty deeds. What's more, this God had appeared to Solomon **"twice,"** once with His offer resulting in wisdom and a second time after the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 3:5; 9:1-2). The writer was astonished that someone who had experienced not one but two personal visitations still could have turned away from the Lord.

Furthermore, the writer was aghast that Solomon would depart from faithfully walking with the Lord in light of the clarity of God's commandments. God had spoken to Solomon explicitly about not following other gods (3:14; 9:4-7). The commands of God were plain, clear, and direct. Yet Solomon did not do what the Lord had commanded. His actions were not taken in ignorance but done as sheer rebellion and direct disobedience. He disregarded God's law and commandments intentionally and specifically. Because of Solomon's disobedience and idolatry, God set His anger against His beloved son of David (see 2 Sam. 7:14-15; 12:24-25).

**VERSES 11-13** / God began His indictment of Solomon by pointing out Solomon's guilt. Even if Solomon had thought or tried to point to his wives as the culprits, as Adam had tried with Eve (Gen. 3:12), he still would have been just as guilty. God said, **"This has been your practice."**

Furthermore, God was clear that Solomon's actions were in violation against God's covenant and commandments (Ex. 20:2-5; Deut. 17:17; 1 Kings 2:3-4). The punishment for this sin was that God would **"tear the kingdom from"** Solomon's hands and place it in the hands of another. The pronouncement by God here is almost verbatim what Samuel declared to King Saul (1 Sam. 15:28). Both men directly disobeyed the commands of the Lord. Both men squandered their places of leadership and status because of their own pride.

Yet unlike Saul's situation, God's judgment on Solomon came with His covenant grace and discipline, having promised David that **"my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul"** (2 Sam. 7:15). The patience and mercy God showed Solomon had their foundation in the covenant promises and love of God shown to **"David"** (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16).

How was Solomon's judgment different from Saul's? First, instead of Solomon losing the kingdom outright, God stayed His hand. The kingdom would be taken away, but not during Solomon's lifetime—it would be ripped out of the hand of his son. Second, God declared that the entire kingdom would not be removed; **"one tribe"**—the tribe of Judah—would remain under the kingship of David's lineage. The covenant line of kings leading to the Messiah would not be broken, no matter how unfaithful Solomon was (see Gen. 49:10).

In this we see once again that God is faithful to keep His covenant promises. He graciously preserved a remnant from which the sinless Messiah, Jesus, would come. God's love and mercy is unmatched.

# POINT 3

## AN ARROGANT HEART RESULTS IN DIVISION AND STRIFE (1 KINGS 12:3-5,12-17).

NOTES

**3** And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, **4** “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.” **5** He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away. . . . **12** So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, “Come to me again the third day.” **13** And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, **14** he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” **15** So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. **16** And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel went to their tents. **17** But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah.

**READ:** Ask two volunteers to read aloud **1 Kings 12:3-5** and **12-17** from their Bibles.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 3-5** commentary to highlight the following point (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Solomon’s son Rehoboam became king. Immediately, the Israelites requested better treatment for their loyalty. The king’s **reply** would make or break the kingdom. God’s **judgment** was in motion.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 12-17** commentary to emphasize the following idea (the **bold** words fill in blanks in the DDG):

Rehoboam’s **prideful** refusal to **listen** to the wise words of the elders and the people of Israel was all that was needed to **divide** the kingdom. And God’s judgment was fulfilled.

**DISCUSS:** Why might division be considered a natural consequence of sin? (sin separates people from the holy God; sin creates a sense of distance between believers and their heavenly Father; sin against others is hurtful and damages relationships, potentially leading to division; sin raises walls of guilt, shame, and self-justification that separate us emotionally and relationally from others)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 3-5** / Given God's judgment against Solomon in the previous chapter and the declaration that the kingdom would be torn out of his son's hand, readers are expecting to see how this will play out. Two particular individuals set up the conflict in this passage.

**"Jeroboam"** had been Solomon's servant, a leader in charge over the forced labor of the northern tribes, which Solomon used to build his palace and the temple. This was the "servant" who would receive the kingdom out of Solomon's discipline (see 1 Kings 11:11). The prophet Ahijah gave Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, an illustrative message that he would be given ten tribes of Israel to rule. Solomon somehow heard of Ahijah's prophecy and sought to murder his servant, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt to live in exile until Solomon's death (11:26-40).

After Solomon died, his son **"Rehoboam"** became the king of Israel (11:43). Meeting in Shechem for the coronation ceremony (12:1), the northern tribes of Israel sought to bargain for a better status and situation than the one they endured under the forced labor of Solomon. By summoning back Jeroboam from Egypt, the tribes attempted to use him as a representative and bargaining chip with Rehoboam. Their one demand was simple: **"Lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."**

In the only display of wisdom Rehoboam ever made, he requested a three-day recess to consult with his advisors. It's obvious the unity of the nation as a whole would stand or fall on the response he would give to the northern tribes and Jeroboam.

**VERSES 12-17** / After consulting with his advisors, rejecting the wise advice of the elders and heeding the foolish advice of his peers (12:6-11), Rehoboam reconvened the summit with Jeroboam and the people of Israel to deliver his verdict. In a parallel deeply similar to the exodus event, Jeroboam was positioned as a second

Moses, Rehoboam a second Pharaoh, and the excessive workload a burden the people were seeking to escape. **4** Rehoboam played the part of the Pharaoh very well, answering the people **"harshly."**

Rehoboam's heart was filled with self-aggrandizing pride and foolishness. The key to success in the kingdom was presented by the elders in their counsel to be a servant to the people so they in turn would serve him forever. But Rehoboam squandered this insight immediately and instead became a domineering, power-hungry tyrant, loading His response with threats: **"I will add to your yoke"** and **"I will discipline you with scorpions."** Nothing about Rehoboam's reign would be uplifting and empowering to the people. Instead, they would serve him and feel the weight of his dominion to a much greater degree than they had under his father, Solomon.

Verse 15 clarifies the insanity of the moment. On one hand, Rehoboam's failure was a failure to listen. He would not hear the needs of the people he was appointed to serve as king. So instead of a land of freedom, flowing with rest and prosperity, this king was making it a second Egypt. On the other hand, Rehoboam's response fulfilled the ordained plan of God: **"It was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word"** that He had spoken through the prophet Ahijah. God exercised sovereign dominion and authority over the heart of the king (see Prov. 21:1). Both human responsibility and divine sovereignty were at work here.

Verse 16 tells us that Israel responded with defiance. The concluding note is that Rehoboam's circle of authority was drastically diminished after this encounter. Ten tribes were ripped from his hand, and now he reigned only **"over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah."** The fulfillment of God's word to Solomon and Jeroboam had been accomplished, and the kingdom was divided.

# MY RESPONSE

Because we have been forgiven of all our sin through Christ, we proclaim the foolishness of relying on our own wisdom for salvation and lift up Jesus as the only hope.

NOTES

## HEAD:

Sin has consequences. Its curse is not merely a corruption of our hearts internally, its power is also found in the devastating effects it has on every aspect of life. This is one reason why God is so seriously put off by our sin. When we knowingly and willingly disobey God's revealed will, we can be sure we will find the consequences of our sin wreaking havoc on everything. The judgment and discipline of God is meant to warn and exhort us to holiness and obedience in our everyday lives. We are to listen to and obey the commands of God because they are given for our good.

**What are some reasons you disregard the Word of God and fail to obey God's commands?**

## HEART:

Solomon's sinful and tragic conclusion to his rule points out how weak we are in securing our own kingdoms and even our salvation. Given the greatest degree of blessing and privilege, Solomon should have succeeded. Yet his fall reminds us of the ways in which our hearts are prone to wander just as his was. Therefore, we should be filled with a deep humility and dependence on the Holy Spirit to enable us to have the two things Solomon lacked: a wholehearted devotion to the Lord and a listening ear to God's Word. We should ask the Lord to cleanse and purify our hearts as we seek to be people "poor in spirit" and full of humility (Matt. 5:3,5).

**How will you seek to cultivate a wholehearted devotion to the Lord?**

## HANDS:

Truly trusting in the Lord and believing in Christ will always result in obedience to His commands. Solomon displayed a heart that was divided and self-absorbed in his own pleasures. He disregarded his father's instruction and ultimately God's law. Although in this life we will never be able to obey God's will perfectly because of our ongoing struggle with sin, our pursuit as people born again by the Holy Spirit should be to live to please and obey the Lord in everything. We're called to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16) and to obey His commands (1 John 2:3-5). And we're empowered by the Spirit to obey God's Word and please Him in all things.

**What will you do this week because of your faith in Jesus, the better Solomon?**

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"We need a king—one who is perfectly righteous, who cannot be corrupted, who is entirely good, in whom there is never any taint of evil. He powerfully saves and transforms his people, who come to him and gladly acknowledge his Lordship. Hail, King Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

—D. A. Carson

## POINT 1: A DIVIDED HEART LEADS TO SIN (1 KINGS 11:4-8).

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### COMMENTARY

“Other than their link to his wives, Solomon’s choice of gods makes no sense. In the ancient world polytheists tended to worship the gods of nations who had conquered their armies or at least the gods of countries more powerful than their own. Ironically, Solomon worships the gods of people he has conquered and already controls. What could he possibly gain from such activity? The whole episode makes no sense, just as idolatry itself makes no sense. Who were these gods Solomon worshiped? The fertility goddess Ashtoreth had been a stumbling block to the Israelites since they arrived in Canaan (Judg 2:13). Perhaps it is fitting for Solomon to worship a sex goddess. Molech was an astral deity (Zeph 1:5) to whom human sacrifices were offered (Lev 20:2-5; 2 Kgs 23:10; Lev 18:21; Jer 32:35). Chemosh, like Molech, probably was also an astral god. Besides these deities, Solomon probably worshiped other gods as well (1 Kgs 11:8). Thus, the miraculously blessed heir of David, leader of the covenant people, has broken the most fundamental command of all: ‘You shall have no other gods before me’ (Exod 20:3).”<sup>6</sup>

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### ILLUSTRATION

When sickness is untreated, or remains undetected, it can result in dangerous, even deadly, consequences. The 2010 Marvel film *Iron Man 2* carries on the story of the wealthy and incredibly brilliant Tony Stark, who realizes his life’s work, and his father’s, was manufacturing deadly and violent weapons. One of those weapons, and the very thing that is keeping him alive, is the palladium core arc reactor inside his chest. While the arc reactor and its core are keeping shrapnel fragments from an incendiary device from reaching his heart and killing him, it is also rapidly poisoning his body. Instead of seeking help and aid from his friends and close associates, Stark tries everything he can to hide the toxic effects of the core on his body and pursues a pleasure-seeking, “grab all the gusto while you can” lifestyle, expecting his death to come quickly. Instead of his actions bringing him satisfaction and closeness with the people he cares about, they end up driving away those closest to him and placing him and others in graver danger than ever before. It is only after Tony’s complete humiliation and loss of almost everything that an outsider (Nick Fury) intervenes and helps Stark find a cure and redeem his fractured relationships (also saving the world, but that’s just a side plot).

# EXTRA

## POINT 2: A REBELLIOUS HEART RECEIVES JUDGMENT

(1 KINGS 11:9-13).

### + COMMENTARY

“The Old Testament history is open about the failures of its great men (one sign of veracity) and gives clear warnings of the consequences of disobedience to God. The divine requirements have been made fully known both in writing and oral teaching (the law, e.g. Ex. 20:1-17; 34:28), and reiterated by prophets and other means such as theophanies (v. 9). Failure to obey God (‘walk in my ways’) justly results in God’s anger. His consequent judgment is (a) prophetic, *Since this is your attitude (heart, NRSV ‘mind’), I will . . .*; (b) thorough, *tear the kingdom away (emphatic)*; (c) follows warnings (vv. 12-15; 1 Sa. 15:28); (d) deferred in mercy, *Not . . . during your lifetime (v. 12, cf. 2 Ki. 20:19)*; and (e) mitigated for the sake of the godly David, who had unswervingly kept the covenant (2 Sa. 7:11-16, cf. Abraham, Gn. 18:19). Note that one tribe will survive (v. 13, cf. 2 Ki. 17:18), Judah now being merged with Benjamin. Solomon’s failure does not annul the divine promise to maintain the surviving remnant. The fate of the Davidic dynasty, Jerusalem and the temple are always closely linked.”<sup>7</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

Every summer there are tragic reports out of Yosemite National Park that visitors to the park have died at some of the most scenic spots. One of the most traveled trails in the park, The Mist Trail, follows the Merced River. As you begin hiking The Mist Trail, a sign warns that hikers should have plenty of water with them. The hike is very strenuous and difficult up to the top of Nevada Falls and on further to the summit of Half Dome. Guests are encouraged to have at least one liter of water, if not more, depending on how far they are traveling. Yet every summer, guests ignore the warnings and end up needing emergency medical aid or even dying due to dehydration along the trail. About 0.8 miles along the trail, hikers come to a scenic footbridge crossing the river. Signs on the trail warn hikers not to cross the barricaded boundaries and enter the river. Its fast-moving currents and slippery surfaces have caused many deaths to travelers seeking a quick dip in the river. As the trail winds up the river, it becomes more and more steep due to the rock formations and the quick ascent that it takes to get to the top of the first waterfall, Vernal Falls. At the top, a very clear and obvious fence has been erected to keep hikers from getting too close to the side of the cliff and falling over the 317-foot drop. Yet hikers and guests will ignore the signs, jump the barricade, and try to get an amazing selfie. Many have fallen to their deaths by ignoring the warnings. At the top of the hike of some 3 miles, Nevada Falls also has signs present warning about its rapid current, slippery rocks, and a significant drop of almost 600-feet down a sheer rock face. Yet travelers constantly ignore the warnings and barriers put up for their protection. One major magazine, *Backpacker*, states that Yosemite’s search and rescue squads respond to over 250 incidents each year and lists the trail as one of the most dangerous hikes in America.

## POINT 3: AN ARROGANT HEART RESULTS IN DIVISION AND STRIFE (1 KINGS 12:3-5,12-17).

### + COMMENTARY

“As Jeroboam is Moses in this replay of the exodus story, so Rehoboam is Pharaoh. The elders—who had, no doubt, had the benefit of Solomon’s own wisdom (cf. 1 Kgs. 10:8) and had little hope of or desire for further advancement from his son—give Rehoboam wise advice . . . But he chooses instead to accept the foolish advice of his younger contemporaries (v. 8) . . . When he does so (vv. 12-14), of course, he is behaving exactly as Pharaoh had behaved before him, reacting to the words of “Moses” by increasing the oppression (cf. Exod. 5:1-21). He is bound to act thus, however, for the Lord has ordained that his word to Jeroboam through Ahijah should come to pass (v. 15). In the midst of all the human decisions that are described to us, God’s decision is being carried through. We have heard it all before: “Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said” (Exod. 7:13; cf. 4:21; 7:3-4; etc.). Nor did this king . . . listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD.”<sup>8</sup>

### + ILLUSTRATION

Recently YouTube, and then Netflix, produced a series that brought forward the stories of the characters from the movie *The Karate Kid* some 30 years into the present day. It takes us back to West Valley High and reveals the courses of life both Daniel Russo and Johnny Lawrence have taken. Russo, the All-Valley High champion, goes on to live a rich and successful life as a car salesman and known celebrity in the area. Lawrence’s life has taken a more somber turn as he can’t hold a job and lives in relative poverty and humiliation. Seeking one last chance at bettering himself and others, Lawrence is put on a course to reopen the infamous Cobra Kai dojo and train students in karate. When Russo hears what Lawrence is doing, he objects violently and, in a surprising turn, becomes the bully while Lawrence is the down-and-out underdog that the audience is hoping will rise up out of his humiliating circumstances. Throughout the series, the two factions of Cobra Kai and Miyage dojos are constantly living in abundant arrogance about themselves and their positions. Instead of listening to each other, both Lawrence and Russo, as well as their students, make miscalculated assumptions and judgments about the other. By failing to hear, listen, and humbly understand where the other is coming from, each faction always assumes the worse. The saddest part is that the high school is split into warring factions that conclude with a violent, in-school karate face off that ends up injuring many students and with two former best friends almost killing each other. The image of arrogance dividing is graphically imbedded in the viewer’s mind.

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