

(1 Kings) Wasted Potential

by David Guzik

The sermon highlights the importance of obedience to God's commands and the consequences of disobedience, even for those who are called to serve God.

Duration: 50:51

Scripture: 1 Kings 13:11

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Spiritual Accountability"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of judgment and how it begins with the house of God. He emphasizes that God judges us based on the light we have received and that it is not surprising for God to start cleaning house by judging those closest to Him first. The preacher highlights the encounter between the prophet from Bethel and the prophet from Judah, where the prophet from Bethel claimed to have received a message from an angel and spoke for the Lord. However, the prophet from Bethel was later judged by God for disobeying His command and speaking a lie in His name.

Transcript

Tonight, we're in First Kings chapters 13 and 14. And we're in this very interesting section. I have to say, I find from this point of the book of First Kings to the end, even more interesting than the beginning part, because now you're dealing with the divided kingdom.

We saw that after the death of Solomon, his son, Rehoboam took the throne of a united Israel, but Rehoboam was very foolish and he alienated half the nation. And indeed, you could say he even incited a civil war. So the 10 northern tribes separated from the United Kingdom of Israel and the northern tribes took the name Israel.

The two southern tribes took the name Judah. So from here throughout the rest of First Kings and for much of the book of Second Kings, you have two separate kingdoms that encompass the people of God, the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. And I have to say, it's going to be a little bit tough for us to keep this straight throughout these weeks because you're bouncing back from one to another.

We might almost wish that the divine historian would have given us just the history of the kingdom and then just the history of the northern kingdom. But the two intertwine so much that it was appropriate to sort of bounce back and forth in the manner that we see here. When we left off with Chapter 12 last time,

Jeroboam had just established these two centers of idolatry at Dan and Bethel, these places where the golden casts were made because he did not want the people from the 10 northern tribes to go to the southern kingdom of Judah, to Jerusalem, to worship as God had appointed.

And so he set up not pagan altars. We remind ourselves this was not the worship of a false god. This was the false worship of the true God.

And that's what Jeroboam instituted. And then we come right here to Chapter 13, verses one and two. And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord and said, Oh, altar, altar. Thus says the Lord. Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David.

And on you, he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you and men's bones shall be burned on you. Now, this messenger from God came from Judah, we might guess from that we're not told specifically, but we might guess that there were no qualified prophets whom the Lord could lead from within the 10 tribes. And so instead, he sent a man from the southern kingdom of Judah up to Bethel.

And he spoke to Jeroboam right there at the altar at Bethel. By the way, I want you to notice something. We have no name for this man of God.

He's anonymous, which reminds us of something very important. You don't need to be famous or well known to be used by God in a significant way. I think it'll be wonderful when we get to heaven and we meet this anonymous man of God who really did something remarkable.

And this prophecy was amazing that he gave in the first two verses. Let me repeat it again. Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David.

And on you, in other words, on this altar, he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you. Now, you know what's remarkable about this prophecy is that it was fulfilled three hundred and forty years later. Second Kings, Chapter 23, verse 15, documents the fulfillment of this prophecy in the days of Josiah.

Let me just read it to you. It says, Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made both that altar and the high place he broke down and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder and burned the wooden image. Now, this was more than a pronouncement of judgment against the altar.

It also prophesied that the judgment would come from the house of ruling Judah of the house of David. And it was a special rebuke and a source of concern to Jeroboam because he was always aware of the threat from the neighbor to the south. You and I look at this and say, Jeroboam, relax, doesn't happen for three hundred and forty years.

Jeroboam didn't know that he lived the rest of his life looking over his shoulder for this man who would come and fulfill this prophecy. He went to his grave, worried about the fulfillment of this prophecy. And we have to say that that was a sort of immediate judgment upon Jeroboam.

That is no light thing for God to put upon a man. A death sentence or the threat of a death sentence that he lives in fear the rest of his life. Now, take a look here, starting at verse three.

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord has spoken. Surely the altar shall split apart and the ashes on it shall be poured out. So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, Arrest him.

You can see this in your mind, can't you arrest him? Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar was also split apart and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. What a dramatic scene there.

You can just see Jeroboam in your mind, arrest that man. And as he stretches out his hand, his hand withers and becomes paralyzed so that he doesn't even have the strength to pull it back to himself. Let's remember something.

The prophecy that the man of God gave in the first two verses would not be fulfilled for hundreds of years. So it would have been very easy for Jeroboam or some of his immediate descendants to say, Oh, that was a false prophecy. Oh, that prophet didn't know what he was talking about.

So he gave an immediate sign by which the truth of the prophet could be known. And by the way, that would be a very convincing sign, wouldn't it? That the altar is split apart and it would be a direct rebuke to the idolatrous worship at that altar. So when Jeroboam heard that, he stretches out his hand, as we said before, arrest him.

It was an immediate reaction to do what? To silence the messenger instead of listening to the message. You know, the prophecy from this man of God was almost like every prophecy that comes concerning judgment. Are you aware that there's a fairly consistent idea throughout the scriptures whenever there's a prophecy of judgment? When God says judgment is coming, it's a warning, but it is also an invitation to repentance.

What did Jeroboam do with this invitation to repentance? He ignored it. Instead, he tried to silence the messenger who brought it. He did not accept the invitation to repent.

And so the hand which he had stretched out towards him withered so that he could not pull it back to himself. God confirmed his word of judgment in two ways. First, he judged the disobedient king in the most obvious way that he had sinned in seeking to arrest him and lay his hand on the prophet.

Now he had no more strength in that hand to lay it against the prophet. But secondly, he fulfilled the immediate word of the prophecy. And that was obviously to split the altar in two.

Now look at verse six. Then the king answered and said to the man of God, please entreat the favor of the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored to me. So the man of God entreated the Lord and the king's hand was restored to him and became as before.

Didn't you think it's interesting? I think this is so wonderful. His hand is withered. The altar is split.

Jeroboam, why didn't you ask one of those golden calves for help? He didn't do that, did he? In this time of glaring need, when he really needs it, he's not thinking about golden calves. He's not thinking about altars that he's made. He talks to the man of God and he says, would you please pray to the righteous Lord who might be able to help him? Now, I need to give you a little head start here.

I don't mean to spoil the story for anybody. But we're going to find out later, Jeroboam did not really repent here. You might think that he did.

Right. I would say it's a little too early just from verse six to say whether or not this was genuine repentance or not. But I will tell you that his subsequent actions tell us that Jeroboam did not actually repent here.

Wanting to receive something from God is not the same as repentance. And that's what Jeroboam wanted, right? Oh, heal my hand, please, please. Did he really want something from God? Absolutely.

Yes. Was it repentance? Absolutely not. But the man of God did what he should.

He prayed to the Lord and the king's hand was restored to him. By the way, you've got to say this showed great grace from this anonymous man of God. He quickly moved from being under arrest to being an intercessor for his persecutor.

That was a lot of mercy from God and from this man of God. Wouldn't he have the right to say, well, what are you going to do? Arrest me now? OK, why don't you just live with this this problem that you have? But he did it. He did it.

And God restored him. He showed more and more mercy to Jeroboam. Now here, verse seven, then the king said to the man of God, come home with me and refresh yourself and I will give you a reward.

But the man of God said to the king, if I were if you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you, nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord saying, you shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way that you came. So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel.

Now, Jeroboam quickly and naturally, given the circumstances, he embraced the man of God as his friend. Let's be friends. Let's do something together here.

You know, I need you. You can be helpful to me. But again, he wanted to refresh the man of God.

He wanted to reward the man of God. But there was not any repentance from the sin which the man of God just denounced. And the man of God, what was his response? Now, you need to pay attention to this because the rest of the chapter gets weird.

I just have to tell you that. And you're not going to understand the rest of the chapter unless you understand what happens here in these few verses. Jeroboam says, here, you know, come on, let me give you some things.

Let me refresh you. Let me bless you. And what did the man of God? No, no, no, King, I can't do it.

God told me to go right home to not accept anything from you and to not even go back the way that I came. Right. We understand that.

OK, now let's get to the weird part. Verse 11. Now, an old prophet dwelt in Bethel and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel.

They also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king and the father said to him, which way did he go? For his sons had seen which way the man of God went, who came from Judah. Then he said to his sons, saddle the donkey for me. So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode on it and he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak.

Then he said to him, are you the man of God who came from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said to him, come home with me and eat bread. And he said, I cannot return with you nor go in with you.

Neither can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the Lord, you shall not eat, eat bread, nor drink water there, nor return by going the way that you came. OK, so we're all clear with this.

It seems that this guy was a faithful prophet to the Lord. It demonstrates to us that not every godly person had left Israel. There were still some godly people there.

And he said, hey, come home with me and eat bread. He gives the invitation to the unnamed man of God who rebuked Jeroboam at Bethel. All right.

Gets weirder. Verse seven, verse 18. He said to him, I, too, am a prophet as you are.

And an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring back bring him back with you to your house that he may eat bread and drink water. He was lying to him. So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drink water.

So do you see what the prophet from Bethel says to the prophet from Judah? Oh, no, no, no, no. It's OK for you to come back with me and come to my house because God told me to do this. I'm a prophet just like you.

But what does it say here? It says he was lying to him. The prophet from Bethel gave a false word from God trying to persuade the man of God from Judah to change his course from doing exactly what God had told him to do. You know, and so he says, hey, do it.

This is it. But he lied to him in telling him to do it. Now, he says an angel spoke to me.

Here's an interesting question for you to think about tonight. Lay your head on the pillow right before you go to sleep. Was he telling the truth about the angel or not? Could have been.

Now, it could have been a lying angel. It could have been an angel of light, a messenger from Satan. It really could have been.

An angelic spirit, but not a godly one. Or he could have just been making up the angel as much as he made up the story of anything. So I think it is possible that maybe an angel came and said this to him.

But if it was, it was not an angel from the Lord. It was a deceptive angel, as Paul says, that it is possible for Satan to transform himself into an angel of light. So what did the man of God from Judah do? He went back with him and ate bread in his house and he drank water.

The man of God from Judah listened to the lie from the prophet of Bethel. And he did this for several reasons. I mean, as I think through it, logically, it makes sense in a lot of ways.

First of all, the prophet from Bethel was probably older. It says that he was an old prophet in verse 11. And so he probably said, well, I want to respect this older man of God.

Secondly, the prophet from Bethel identified with the man of God. He said, I, too, am a prophet just as you. Right.

Building that bond, that identification. Hey, we're in this together. Third, the prophet from Bethel claimed a spectacular experience.

An angel came and said this to me. I could just see the prophet from Judah saying, you know, an angel has never spoken to me. This guy must really have it together if angels are speaking to him.

Next, the prophet from Bethel claimed to speak for the Lord. He said clearly by the word of the Lord. And then the prophet from Bethel did not seem to be an idolater who should be shunned.

And then finally, the prophet from Bethel didn't offer any reward other than simple food. Right. He didn't say, come back to my house and I'll give you lots of money.

There wasn't anything like that. Just come on over and eat. It sounds innocent enough.

For all those good reasons why I can think why the prophet of Judah should have listened to him. This this was an ungodly enticement. It was the responsibility of the man of God from Judah to resist it.

He had a word from God to guide his actions and he should receive no other word except through a dramatic and direct confrontation by God's spirit. His failure at this point ended his usefulness as a man of God. When you get a direct command from God, do not be easily shaken from it.

And this man of God in Judah, he resisted a little bit. Right. He resisted first to Jeroboam.

Good for you, man of God from Judah. He resisted a little bit from the man of God from Bethel. Good for you, man of God from Judah.

But yet he didn't resist enough. And so what happens? Verse 20. There they are.

They're eating a nice meal at the man of God from Bethel's house. And look at what he says. Now, it happened as they sat at the table that the word of the Lord came to the prophet who brought him back.

And he cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, saying, Thus says the Lord, because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you. But but you came back, ate bread and drank water in the place of which the Lord had said you eat no bread and drink no water. Your corpse shall not come to the house, to the tomb of your fathers.

This prophet from Bethel, who had spoken a lie in the name of the Lord, now he received a true prophecy while the man of God from Judah ate at his table. And he said, You disobeyed the word from the Lord. And this is going to be your judgment.

You should have kept the command that the Lord gave you. And what was the judgment? The judgment was simply that your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers. I want you to notice something.

God judged the man of God from Judah far more strictly than he judged Jeroboam. Far more strictly than he judged the prophet from Bethel, who lied. It would seem that those two men, Jeroboam and the prophet from Bethel, to me, it seems that they were guilty of worse sins, lying in the name of the Lord, making an idolatrous altar.

Those seem like worse sins to me. Then why did God judge the man of God from Judah more harshly? I think it was because this man received more light from God. This is a very important principle from the scriptures.

First of all, God judges us according to the light we have received. Secondly, God's judgment often begins with the house of God. Again, we have to remember this.

What does it say in 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 17? That judgment begins at the house of God. We don't want it to be that way, right? We want God to judge all of them first. But don't be surprised that when God starts cleaning house, so to speak, that he begins with those closest to him and then works outwards.

And so this was it. He compromised in something that he should not have compromised on. Now, verse 23.

So it was that after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk that he saddled his donkey for him, the prophet who he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road and the donkey stood by it.

The lion also stood by the corpse. And there are men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road and the lion standing by the corpse. This is weird.

I mean, the word, the second word from the prophet of Bethel was fulfilled. He didn't say that the man of God would perish by a lion, did he? But he said, you're not going to be buried in the tombs of your fathers, which would imply to the man of God from Judah, you're not going to make it home safe. Something's going to happen on your way home.

And so this was no mere accident, but something unique from God. The lion did not attack the donkey. Wouldn't you expect that? I mean, there's a donkey.

That's good eating for a lion, I would suppose. Nor did he attack the men who passed by. They would walk by and they'd see a lion sitting there, maybe growling, a donkey standing there and a dead prophet right there.

And then, well, that's the strangest thing I've ever seen. These men would pass by and say, I mean, what else could they say? So we stopped in the middle of verse 25. Let's pick it up here in verse 25, the middle.

Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. Now, when the prophet who had brought him back from the way he heard it, he said, it is the man of God who is disobedient to the word of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke to him.

And he spoke to his sons, saying, saddle the donkey for me. So they saddled it. And he went and found his corpse thrown on the road and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse.

The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey. And the prophet took up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn and to bury him.

And he laid the corpse in his own tomb and he mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother. So it was after he had buried him that he spoke to his son, saying, when I am dead, then bury me in the top in the tomb where the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones for the saying which he cried out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places which are in the city of Samaria will surely come to pass.

This old prophet from Bethel was sympathetic to the man of God from Judah, even in his disobedience and in the judgment that came. I got to say, this man of God from Bethel was not a particularly righteous man. He doesn't seem to be especially a good prophet.

You know, the lying prophecy thing really kind of stumbles me. I don't know about you. He led this man of God to Judah in the sin and in the judgment.

But he recognized the common weakness of this fellow servant of God. How how strange it must have been for that old prophet from Bethel to look at his fallen fellow prophet, to look at his dead body and to say, my sin was worse than his. I led him into this sin.

Listen, the ways of God's judgment are sometimes past our finding out. I can't tell you why it seemed exactly that God judged this more faithful prophet from Judah worse than this less faithful prophet from Bethel from Bethel. But he did.

And though he lied to the prophet, though he led him into sin, though he prophesied judgment against him, the prophet from Bethel still respected the man of God from Judah. Perhaps he understood that the word that he spoke against Jeroboam required a courage that he did not have. But might I remind you of something? God didn't tell the prophet in Bethel to go speak against Jeroboam.

Isn't that curious? Why did God send all the way to Judah to bring a prophet to Bethel to speak against Jeroboam when there's a prophet right there? I think it was probably because this man from Bethel didn't have the courage that the man from Judah had. Verse 33, after this event, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again, he made priests from every class of people for the high places. Whoever wished, he consecrated him and he became one of the priests of the high places.

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 should have turned after the prophecy from the man of God from Judah. After the withered hand thing, after the altar splitting open, after his withered hand was healed, he should have repented.

He should have turned, but he didn't. God's dealing with the man of God from Judah was also a testimony to Jeroboam, but he didn't listen. It's like every one of these events.

And again, we could name them over and over again. They were like hammers beating upon Jeroboam. But Jeroboam was like cold iron.

You know, you can't shape cold iron. If it's heated up, then the hammer hitting upon it makes a difference. And sometimes we think trials will change people, right? Not necessarily.

If they're like cold iron, it won't change them at all. But if they're heated up and pliable, then the hammer of a trial upon them may change them. And here, Jeroboam even became one of the priests of his own high places.

It was a wicked, wicked thing. I think about this man, Jeroboam, and I think that he had great opportunity, especially in light of the promise that God made to him earlier. We talked about this last week in 1 Kings chapter 11, how God made this amazing promise to Jeroboam through a prophet that if he would only obey the Lord, then he would have a secure kingdom, a secure dynasty that God would protect him and protect his throne.

He had great potential, great promise, but he didn't obey. And therefore, it slipped through his hands. Did you know that in his failure, Jeroboam became the prototype of the disobedient kings of Israel? There's a phrase that we're going to run across a lot, okay? This phrase is repeated many times in the book of 1 Kings and 2 Kings.

This is the phrase. Are you ready? He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he made Israel to sin. You want to know what kings that phrase is used of? What kings sinned by walking in the way of Jeroboam? Ready? Asa, Jehu, Omri, Azariah, Jehoram, Jehu II, Jehoaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Mennahiim, Pechaniah, and Pekah.

All these kings, it's mentioned of them. They followed in the sin of Jeroboam. You want to know a curious exception from that list? Ahab.

Of Ahab, it said that his sin was worse than Jeroboam's. But of all the rest of them, it's repeated again and again and again that they sinned in the same way. And what a terrible legacy to have.

You are the prototype of sin. You are the example. When it comes time to talk about how sinful the kings of Israel are, you're the example that we judge them all by.

But at the same time, remember, Jeroboam had great opportunity, but instead he became a great curse to every generation of the northern kingdom after that. Even at the very end of the kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam's sin was remembered. Let me read to you from 2 Kings, chapter 17, verses 21 through 23.

This is at the very end of the kingdom of Israel before it's conquered. OK, many years later than this. It says, for he tore Israel from the house of David and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebath king.

Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them commit a great sin for the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam, which he did. They did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight. And as he had said by all his servants, the prophets, so Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria as it is to this day.

I believe that Jeroboam is one of the most striking examples of sinful failure in the entire Bible. He failed despite great blessing and favor from God. He failed for the sake of mere political advantage.

He failed and led an entire nation into idolatry. He failed despite specific warnings to repent. He failed despite specific judgment and deliverance from that judgment.

He failed despite a clear message and example of integrity right before him. Jeroboam, I have to say without hesitation, one of the greatest failures in the Bible. Well, let me tell you something.

He's the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, right? Do you think he sets a good example for the following kings? I don't mean to spoil the story for you, but the history of the subsequent kings of Judah will be a mixed bag. Some good, some bad. Does anybody know how many good kings there were of the northern kingdom of Israel? None.

You have a few that started out good, but none who finished well. Jeroboam set the pattern right here. All right, let's take a look at chapter 14 now.

At that time, Abiyah, the son of Jeroboam, became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Please rise and disguise yourself that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahiyah, the prophet is there, who told me that I should be king over this people.

Also take with you 10 loaves, some cakes and a jar of honey and go to him. He will tell you what will become of the child. You know, Jeroboam was a king, but even kings have trouble that is common to men.

His sick son troubled him and prompted him to seek the help of a prophet, even the prophet who had previously prophesied that Jeroboam would take the throne. I mean, it was a very logical person for him to turn to. And so he said, disguise himself, turn to this prophet.

He sent his wife. By the way, isn't this a familiar pattern for Jeroboam and for many people? When times are good, he's with the golden calves of Bethel and Dan, right? When times are bad, what does he do? He turns to the Lord and to the true prophets of the Lord. So he says, you know, wife, disguise yourself, go and take a gift.

By the way, how foolish here. Isn't it funny? Jeroboam thought that this prophet could see into the invisible spiritual realm and tell him prophetic truth about what would happen with his son. But he couldn't tell who was behind the veil speaking to him.

It's funny. It's just people do strange things like this. He said, tell him what he will tell you what will become of the child.

I want you to notice Jeroboam did not tell his wife to pray for their son. He didn't ask his wife, find out from the prophet. Would you have the prophet please pray for our son? No, no, no.

He wanted to use the prophet more as a fortune teller than as a man really seeking the will of God. It would have been much better if he would have said, hey, listen, instead, why don't you get this prophet to pray for you? Why don't you get this prophet to pray on our behalf? But he didn't do it. Verse four here.

And Jeroboam's wife did so. She arose and went to Silo and came to the house of Ahia. But Ahia could not see for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age.

Now, the Lord had said to Ahia, here is the wife of Jeroboam coming to ask you something about her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus, you shall say to her, for it will be when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman. And so it was when Ahia heard the sound of her footsteps, as she came through the door, he said, come in, wife of Jeroboam.

Why do you pretend to be another person? For I have been sent to you with bad news. Isn't that great? First of all, I mean, if he's a true prophet, the Lord can tell him what's going on. But I love what he says there at the end there in verse six.

He says, I have been sent to you. She walks into his door and he says, I've been sent to you. Wait, I thought I'm coming to you.

No, no. The prophet says, I've been sent to you. And this was bad news.

Verse seven. Go tell Jeroboam, thus says the Lord God of Israel, because I exalted you from among the people and made you ruler over my people, Israel and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you. Yet you have not been as my servant, David, who kept my commandments and who followed me with all his heart to do only what was right in my eyes.

But you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made yourself other gods and molded images to provoke me to anger and have cast me behind your back. Therefore, behold, I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel bond and free. I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam as one takes away refuse until it is all gone.

The dog shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city. And the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field. For the Lord has spoken.

Isn't this amazing? He says here clearly, you have done more evil than all who were before you. Now, stop, do a little memory check here. Who was before Jeroboam? Rehoboam, was he a good king? He was a bad king.

Solomon, he ended up a bad king. Saul, he was a wicked man. And yet all of these, God says to Jeroboam, you've done worse.

Matter of fact, Jeroboam became the measuring line for bad kings to come. And God even compared Jeroboam unfavorably with David with the words when he says, as my servant David. Let's remind ourselves, David certainly fell into some sins.

But what was the difference with David? David repented. There are many rulers, many princes who sin as David sinned, but do not repent as David repented. Matter of fact, God says to Jeroboam here in this section, you have cast me behind your back.

The idea is that you've treated me like garbage. You've just thrown me away and I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. And we'll cut off from Jeroboam every male.

Jeroboam, you could have had a lasting dynasty. You could have had an enduring reign, but you will not have it. You wasted the promise of God with your unbelief, your idolatry and your outright rejection of God.

Well, here's the immediate judgment. Verse 12. Arise, therefore, go to your own house.

When your feet enter the city, the child shall die and all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave. Because in him there is found something good towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. Moreover, the Lord will raise up for him a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam.

This is the day. What? Even now, for the Lord will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land, which he gave to their fathers and will scatter them beyond the river because they have made their wooden images, provoking the Lord to anger.

And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin. Isn't that tragic? God, excuse me, Jeroboam sent his wife to discover the fate of his son. The bad news was that the child would die.

Yet his death would be a demonstration of God's mercy because at least he would be buried in honor and properly mourned. Such great judgment would come upon the house of Jeroboam that everybody would see that that little boy who died, he was the fortunate one. He was the blessed one.

And again, God reminds them of the judgment that will come some 300 years later, the uprooting of Israel, sending them into exile from the Assyrians. So verse 17. Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tisra.

When she came to the threshold of the house, the child died and they buried him. And all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke through his servant Ahiah, the prophet. The prophecy about Israel being carried away into captivity, that would not be fulfilled for centuries, for some 300 years.

But this prophecy was fulfilled immediately so that they would know it was a true word from a profitable Lord. Verse 19. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned.

And indeed, are they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel the period that Jeroboam reigned was 22 years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab, his son, reigned in his place.

Now there's something you need to understand here. It says that he rested with his fathers. Don't think that that means that he died a peaceful death.

It just means that he died. Second Chronicles chapter 13 tells us that the Lord struck him and he died. So he didn't die peacefully.

He died at the judgment of God. By the way, now we start getting into the interesting phenomenon here where we learn more oftentimes of more than what is written here in First Kings by filling in things from First and Second Chronicles. But this is one of the details that we learn.

If you just took the account in First Kings, oh, well, he died peacefully in his sleep and he rested with his father. No, no, no. God struck him and he died according to Second Chronicles chapter 13.

Well, that's Jeroboam. Let's move the camera south. What's happening in the southern kingdom of Judah? What's happening with Rehoboam? Forget about Jeroboam.

Now Rehoboam, verse 21. And Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king.

He reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name was Nama and Ammonitus. Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins, which they committed more than all their fathers had done.

For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to the abominations of the nations, which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

So Israel was in a bad way, following after the idolatries of Jeroboam, the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. And Jeroboam was unrepentant and the judgment of God was coming upon them. Surely we would hope that things would be better in the southern kingdom of Judah.

They weren't. These sins provoked the Lord to jealousy because essentially they were sins of idolatry. And Judah turned their back on the God who loved them and redeemed them.

And like an unfaithful spouse, they pursued spiritual adultery with idols. And then it also says that there were perverted persons in the land. This specifically describes prostitutes associated with the worship of idols.

And it probably means that these were homosexual prostitutes. The bottom line is there in verse 24. They did according to all the abominations of the nations, which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

Considering how depraved the Canaanite nations were, this was a very strong condemnation. So verse 25, It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house.

He took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields with which Solomon had made. This was only the fifth year of Rehoboam.

This wasn't so far from the time of David and Solomon. Solomon only been dead for about five years. And the time of strength and security under David and under Solomon, it was gone.

No foreign enemy ever did as much against God's people during the time as David and Solomon has happened during this occasion from Rehoboam. Shishak, the king of Egypt, came against Jerusalem. By the way, this account is confirmed in Second Chronicles.

It's also confirmed by archaeology. The record of Second Chronicles 12 gives us many different details that were not really told to us here in First Kings chapter 14. For example, we're told why the attack succeeded.

It was because it says that Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord. We're also told that Shishak brought an allied army of different nations against Judah. We're told that Shishak took the fortified cities of Judah on his way to Jerusalem.

We're told in Second Chronicles that as the enemy army approached Jerusalem, the prophet Shemiah, I didn't even know there was a prophet Shemiah, but this prophet Shemiah led the leaders of Judah in genuine repentance. And because of their repentance, God allowed Jerusalem to remain, but only as servants of Shishak, the king of Egypt. And what did he do? He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house.

Solomon left great wealth to his son Rehoboam in the temple and in the palace. And after only five years, the wealth was largely gone. You think about the kids wasting the inheritance.

That was it from Rehoboam. He wasted it. He took away all those gold shields.

Remember those 500 shields, the 200 large ones, the 300 small ones that we studied about. Those shields made beautiful displays in the house of the forest of Lebanon, but they were of no use in battle. All of this was taken away.

It was exposed in the days of Rehoboam. You know what we're told? We're told that Rehoboam made. Well, let's just get into it here.

Verse 27, you'll see for yourself. Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard who guarded the doorway of the king's house. And whenever the king entered the house of the Lord, the guards carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.

The replacement of gold with bronze is a perfect picture of the decline under the days of Rehoboam. The dynasty of David went from gold to bronze in five years. That's pretty dramatic, isn't it? And even so, in the days of Solomon, they hung the gold seals on display in the royal palace.

But under Rehoboam, they didn't think it was safe to even have the bronze shields out. They put them away whenever they could. Verse 29, now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.

So Rehoboam rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His mother's name was Namah and Ammonitus. Then Abiyam, his son, reigned in his place.

Something interesting from 2 Chronicles about the death of Rehoboam. 2 Chronicles 12, verse 14 says, And he did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. What does that tell you about Rehoboam? He had no personal relationship with God.

I think it's significant. Think of David. Strong personal relationship with God, right? Amazing.

I mean, read the Psalms. Think of Solomon. Smart, wise.

Is there much evidence of a personal relationship with God and Solomon? Not much. Solomon's sons, Rehoboam. Any evidence of a personal relationship with God? None.

It's a terrible thing. Matter of fact, you could say that Rehoboam had a disobedient father and a heathen mother. Remember how many times it's been? It's what? Two or three times his mother and Ammonitus is mentioned.

Disobedient father, heathen mother. Not a good combination. And so here's the idea here.

At the very end, we are reminded of who Rehoboam's mother was. One of Solomon's foreign wives. Don't you think this is another way that the divine historian is reminding us of all the evil that came upon Solomon and his descendants because of his foreign wives? And it says there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.

These two men were very different. Rehoboam governed like a tyrant. He started bad.

Yet it says that he humbled himself to God towards the end of his life. We find that out from Second Chronicles, Chapter 12. Jeroboam governed as a populist, as a man who was connected with the people.

He started his life with great promise, but it ended terribly. We're not off to a good start with our two kings of the divided monarchy. What's next? Well, that's where the next time we get together, when we start getting in to Chapter 15 and we see these following kings, both of Israel and of Judah, you're going to see judgment come upon the house of Jeroboam and you're going to see what God does with the house of David in Judah.

But I am just struck with, again, this whole lesson that we leave with. Here, the tragedy of wasted potential. Here, Jeroboam, an amazing promise of God, great potential before the Lord.

What became of it? Nothing. He died in judgment, with judgment not upon him, but upon his whole house. Rehoboam, I mean, of the heritage of David and Solomon, he had potential.

He had a promise. What did he make of it? Nothing. You know, it's just something to think about as we look at other people and as we look at ourselves.

God sure gives us a lot of potential, doesn't he? You think of the people in this room right now. You think of what the combined potential in our lives could do before the Lord. What God could do just with the small number of people in this room right now, really committed, really on fire for God.

And then you think what God does with wasted potential. What a tragedy it is. Listen, you may not have the same gifts as another person.

You may not be as, you know, as talented, as smart, as whatever you want to say. But God doesn't expect you to run anybody else's race. He expected Jeroboam to run his race, Rehoboam to run his race.

He expects you to run your race and just fulfill your potential. I think that's a really good prayer for us. Lord, help me to fulfill everything you've called me to be and everything that I can be before you.

Well, let's pray that right now. Father, that is our prayer. We are haunted by the idea that we might not fulfill the potential that you've given us, Lord.

We see so many tragic stories in the scriptures, Lord. I think of Samson as a man who never fulfilled his potential. I think, Lord, of Solomon as a man who didn't.

Of course, tonight, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Lord, help us to have a passion to fulfill the potential that you have given us. And with that, we will be content.

Thank you, Lord, building us a real heart to prepare our hearts to seek the Lord and avoid this great sin of Rehoboam. We pray it, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen.

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