

Lesson 4 | September 27, 2020

A United Kingdom Divided



Study Text: 1 Kings 12:1–20; 2 Kings 17:1–23; 21:1–17; 22:1–20; 23:3–5,25; 2 Chronicles 36:11–21

Central Truth: Godly people seek the Lord rather than evil counsel..

Key Verse: Psalm 1:1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful (KJV).

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers (NIV).

Learning Objectives

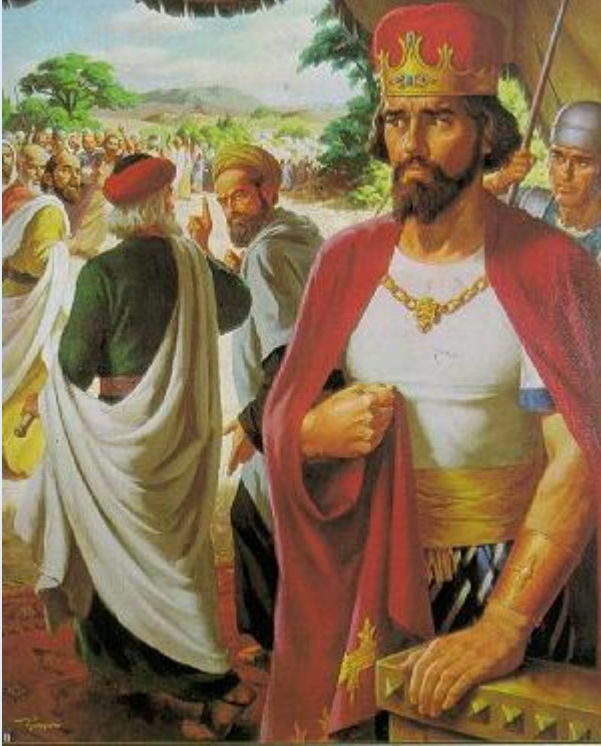
- Identify the relationship between the failures of the kings of Israel and Judah and their disobedience to God's covenant commands.
- Recognize how we as Christians might face temptations and sins similar to the kings, especially in making decisions.
- Determine if the desire to conform to culture affects the students' decision-making, and respond with repentance.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: In 1948, in a speech to the House of Commons, Winston Churchill stated, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." The historical narrative of the Old Testament does far more than just give us a history of Israel. The story is really about God and how He dealt with humanity, most often His chosen people. We learn what God expects from us by observing their mistakes. Today we will look at some failures of Israel's leaders.

Opening Activity—Good Advice and Bad Advice

Ask your students to share a good piece of advice they have received. It could relate to their careers, their faith, or any facet of life. Then ask them to share some examples of bad advice and how they knew it was bad. **Good Advice: "Set your sites on Heaven and don't let anything steer you away from your goal."** **Bad Advice: Let's take prayer out of schools because there must be separation of the church and the state. How about, 'The woman is in charge of her own body so if she wants an abortion, she should be able to get one.'**



Say: Ungodly decisions can have terrible consequences. This lesson focuses on , who followed Solomon as king over Israel, but whose decisions led to division in the kingdom. His bad decisions were made despite the promise God had given David—a promise based on the condition of godly living. Sadly, very few kings of God’s people lived godly. The key to experiencing the promises of the Bible is having a heart committed to God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Early in his reign, Solomon’s actions seemed to indicate that he would follow God’s commands. He even prayed for wisdom in governing the people But his humble dependence on God was short-lived. His lust for sensual gratification would lead to his acquisition of 700 wives and 300 concubines who would lead him into idolatry (see 1 Kings

11:1–6; note that a concubine was a slave taken into a family to bear children). Also, Solomon built his vast kingdom on the backs of the northern tribes of Israel, those initially aligned with Saul.

In 1 Kings 11:26–40, Solomon appointed a strong northern leader named Jeroboam to lead the coalition of indentured servants of the northern tribes. Eventually, Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon and fled to Egypt. On the way a prophet named Ahijah foretold the dissolution of the kingdom between the northern tribes and Judah. Solomon’s sin was going to be punished.

Part 1—Evil Counsel Divides the Kingdom

Rehoboam Follows Bad Advice

1 Kings 12:1–15

[1Ki 12:1-20 KJV] 1 And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. 2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard [of it], (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) 3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, 4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. 5 And he said unto them, Depart yet [for] three days, then come again to me. And the people

departed. 6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? 7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, [and] which stood before him: 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou [it] lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little [finger] shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; 14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father [also] chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.



Say: Most people seek advice at times. It may be about family relationships, career decisions, or what to do about a particularly baffling personal decision. When advice is given, we choose whether to follow it or not. Often we ask more than one person for advice about the same issue. When Solomon's son Rehoboam became king, he received advice from more than one group of people. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king. Jeroboam returned to represent the northern tribes, petitioning Rehoboam to lighten the burdens Solomon had

placed on them. Rehoboam sought the wise counsel of Solomon’s advisors regarding this unfair treatment of the northern tribes. They told him to treat the tribes favorably (12:7). However, **Rehoboam rejected their advice, choosing instead to follow the advice of his younger advisors, who told him to be even more cruel than his father had been. Ultimately, the northern tribes rebelled.**

Discuss

? In light of our society, what are some specific temptations that seem common among Christians today, and how can we protect ourselves against them?

? Rehoboam listened to bad counsel and made a bad decision as a result. How can we identify sources of godly counsel to help us avoid bad decisions?

Rehoboam Loses Most of His Kingdom

1 Kings 12:16–20

16 So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither [have we] inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. 17 But [as for] the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who [was] over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. 20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.



Say: Bad decisions bring bad consequences.

After Rehoboam’s decision to be even more cruel to the people, the northern tribes rebelled and the kingdom was divided. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God’s people had revolted against leadership before (see 2 Samuel 2 and 20). However, here the divide was far more profound—and lasting. Note that **in 1 Kings 12:16–20, the northern tribes are called “Israel,” while the descendants of David were characterized as sons of Israel who lived in Judah (verse 17).** From this point on, those ruled by the lineage of David would be called “Judah,” and the northern tribes—beginning with the reign of

Jeroboam—would be called “Israel.” Verse 19 states that “Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day” (NIV).

God’s promise to Solomon was contingent upon his keeping the covenant requirements. Solomon did not do this and, even before his death, God had decided to divide the kingdom. However, God still gave Rehoboam Judah to rule, and this nation would outlast the kingdom that began under Jeroboam. **The northern kingdom would fall in 722 bc, around 200 years after the kingdoms divided.** This division would have a great impact upon the remainder of the Old Testament.

Resource Packet Item 1: A Kingdom Divided (map)

Distribute Resource Packet Item 1, making note of the division of the land between Israel and Judah. Emphasize to the class that the Messiah would come from the line of Judah.

Discuss

? What consequences might result today if people of influence or in leadership are not sensitive to the concerns of others?

? Can you think of a time when your choice of whose advice to follow has resulted in a positive or negative outcome for yourself and others? Explain.

Part 2—Divided Loyalties

Manasseh Leads Judah Away From God

2 Kings 21:1–17

[2Ki 21:1-17 KJV] 1 Manasseh [was] twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Hephzibah. 2 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke [him] to anger. 7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In

this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. 9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel. 10 And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, 11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, [and] hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which [were] before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: 12 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I [am] bringing [such] evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. 13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as [a man] wipeth a dish, wiping [it], and turning [it] upside down. 14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; 15 Because they have done [that which was] evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day. 16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD. 17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?



Say: Everyone has leadership responsibility toward someone else—family members, other believers, employees, neighbors, and more. Decisions made by leaders have far-reaching results. The responsibility of spiritual leadership is especially heavy because the impact of such leaders includes the eternal, spiritual realm. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Books of Kings offer a kind of “report card” on the kings of Israel and Judah, noting whether each did good or evil in the eyes of the Lord. **None of the kings of Israel received a good report, and very few of the kings in the southern kingdom of Judah were described as doing good.** Manasseh was preceded by

Hezekiah, a reformer who sought to return the nation to covenant faithfulness with God. Manasseh’s fifty-five year reign reversed Hezekiah’s reforms, leading to him being regarded as the worst of Judah’s kings. He reintroduced Canaanite idol worship—even to the point of practicing human sacrifice. **He also consulted mediums and erected a carved image of Asherah (a Canaanite deity) in God’s temple.**

Note that the “report card” in the verses following 2 Kings 21:2 is not based on political skill or gifts, but rather on lack of devotion to God’s covenant commands. Manasseh’s sins were so severe that they brought judgment on Judah. He ignored or perhaps murdered the prophets who prophesied against him. He was more wicked than the Canaanites before him (verse 11), and he caused Judah to sin. In the end, the judgment of Judah would be certain. Manasseh’s son Amon would continue the wickedness, but Amon’s son Josiah would become a great reformer and delay judgment for a period of time. However, judgment would come to Judah. The sins of Josiah’s predecessors would not be overlooked.

Discuss

? Because Manasseh ruled for over five decades, the introduction of idolatrous behavior was likely a long process. How can we avoid the “gradual process” of allowing sin’s influence to become greater and greater?

? What are some ways the church today might become negatively influenced by the culture around us, and how can we instead be a positive influence?

Josiah Leads Judah Back to God

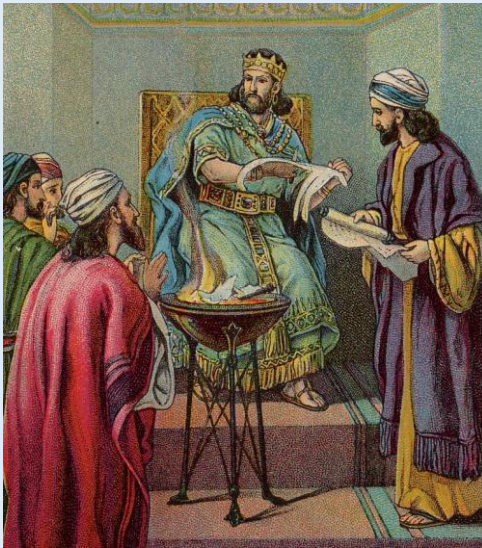
2 Kings 22:1–20; 23:3–5,25

[2Ki 22:1-20 KJV] 1 Josiah [was] eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. 2 And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3 And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of

king Josiah, [that] the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, 4 Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: 5 And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which [is] in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house, 6 Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7 Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully. 8 And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. 10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, 13 Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. 14 So Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. 15 And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, 16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, [even] all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. 18 But to the

king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, [As touching] the words which thou hast heard; 19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard [thee], saith the LORD. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

[2Ki 23:3-5, 25 KJV] 3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all [their] heart and all [their] soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant. 4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. 5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. ... 25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there [any] like him.



Say: Have you ever looked at the world around you and felt powerless to stem the tide of sin that seems so prevalent? After all, how can one person or a small group of people make a difference in the face of such great need? When Josiah came to power, he was stepping into a society degraded by sin, and one he had inherited from his predecessors (Share your highlights.)

When Nebuchadnezzar and Manasseh humbled themselves before the Lord, our great God poured out amazing grace upon these formerly godless and prideful kings. King Josiah demonstrated how one man devoted to God can change the course of his nation. His “report card” was unmatched, declaring that he “followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kings 22:2, NIV). It is equally

remarkable that Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law after many decades of neglect (2 Kings 22:8).

Prior to this event, Josiah had already committed in his heart to serve God and lead the nation of Judah back to God. He became king when he was eight years old and, eight years later, he had begun to seek God. After four more years, he had begun to purge Judah of idolatry (see 2 Chronicles 34:1–7). In the eighteenth year of his reign, the book of the Law was found. It is tragic that the king of Judah was surprised by the teachings of the Law when it was read to him (2 Kings 22:13). Clearly, Josiah did not know what the Law taught. Judah had become so corrupted that virtually no one knew the Law. Fortunately, Josiah responded with a desire to live by God’s requirements, as well as lead the people into a revival of covenant living. Chapter 23 outlines the steps Josiah took to rid the nation of idolatry.

After Josiah had instituted his reforms to reinstate proper worship of God, he also reinstated the Passover. There was no king like him, for he turned to the Lord “with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses” (verse 25, NIV).

Yet this declaration is directly followed by a reminder of the fact that God had pronounced judgment on Judah because of Manasseh (see verses 26–27). The kings who followed Josiah would return to evil, and God would ultimately bring judgment in **586 BC. with the fall of Judah to the Babylonians**. While Josiah’s passion for change was based on an inward commitment to God, his reforms ultimately could only bring outward change. **The revival did not last because the people did not maintain an inward change toward godliness. How does one maintain his or her inward change?**

Resource Packet Item 2: A Royal Report Card

Distribute the work sheet and assign each of your students to look up the Scripture passage on one or more of the kings (depending on how many students are in your class). Have them give a “Pass” or “Fail” grade to each one to see how many of the kings received passing grades in their leadership of the people. Discuss the application portion at the bottom of the work sheet.

Discuss

? What lessons might we learn from Josiah’s response to hearing the Law read in 2 Kings 22–23?

? What is the difference between an outward commitment to God and an inward commitment to Him? Why is an inward commitment more sincere and lasting?

Part 3—Downfall of Israel and Judah

Israel Is Punished for Disobedience

2 Kings 17:1–25

[2Ki 17:1-25 KJV] 1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. 2 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. 3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. 4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as [he had done] year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 7 For [so] it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9 And the children of Israel did secretly [those] things that [were] not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. 10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: 11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as [did] the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: 12

For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, [and by] all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments [and] my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that [were] round about them, [concerning] whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. 16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, [even] two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. 24 And the king of Assyria brought [men] from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed [them] in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. 25 And [so] it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, [that] they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew [some] of them.

Say: God is gracious and merciful, and He is also holy. He promised His people peace and prosperity in the land. In response, they were to serve Him only. Instead, they worshipped idols and committed sin of every kind. **(Play the video for Lesson 4, available at RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult.)**

The northern kingdom of Israel, formed under King Jeroboam around **920 BC.**, essentially included all of the tribes except Judah and Benjamin. The history of this kingdom was marked with violence as well as apostasy in the form of idolatry. We find an accounting of all of the ways Israel had forsaken the stipulations of the covenant in 2 Kings 17:7–23. This passage begins with the familiar reminder of God’s deliverance from Egypt. In spite of the fact that God had blessed them from the beginning, Israel embraced the customs of the Canaanites, built pagan places of worship, made sacred pillars to Asherah, and served Baal. **A phrase that is repeated throughout the Old Testament is that they worshipped “on every high hill and under every spreading tree” (verse 10, niv)—a sad declaration of the vast extent of their idolatry.** The great sin of Jeroboam was the establishment of worship centers of the golden calves at Dan and at Bethel (see 1 Kings 12:25–30). These cities represented the northernmost and southernmost extents of the kingdom of Israel. In addition to all of this, the kingdom of Israel practiced divination through mediums.

The end would come for Israel in 722 BC. at the hands of the Assyrians. God had given them roughly 200 years of grace, even as prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, and Amos sought to see them turn from their wicked ways. The sad reality of the historical books is that Joshua had warned all the tribes of Israel about the danger of forsaking the covenant (see Joshua 24).

It is important to note also that the covenant promises were corporate in nature. If the king was willing to live by the covenant stipulations, the priests would follow, and after that, the people would follow as well. Keeping the covenant meant that they would have peace, prosperity, and fertility in the Promised Land. But rejecting the covenant would lead to judgment.

Discuss

? How did God warn His people about the consequences of sin in Old Testament times, and how does He warn us today? **God sent prophets to warn Israel. Today God’s word warns us.**

? God provided two centuries of grace for the northern kingdom of Israel before judgment came. How will knowing that God is consistent in grace and judgment throughout the Bible help us understand and apply all of Scripture today?

Judah Is Punished for Disobedience

2 Chronicles 36:11–21

[2Ch 36:11-21 KJV] 11 Zedekiah [was] one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD his God, [and]

humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet [speaking] from the mouth of the LORD. 13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. 14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till [there was] no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave [them] all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all [these] he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: [for] as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

Say: Although Judah was the line from which the Messiah would come, God did not spare the kingdom from punishment for their disobedience. A few of their kings received a passing grade on their report cards, but they were not able to get the people to serve only God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

[2Ch 7:14 KJV] 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

God's judgment upon the kingdom of Judah came at the hands of the Babylonians, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem in **586 BC**. While we know that final verdict

against this kingdom as a result of the sinfulness under Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 36 states that the people despised the words of the prophets until there was no remedy (verse 16). Just as God had judged the Canaanites by the hand of Joshua, Judah would now be judged by the armies of Babylon. It is interesting that the writer of Chronicles singled out the prophet Jeremiah as one to whom King Zedekiah had not humbled himself (verse 12). Jeremiah stated that the judgment of all nations is in the hands of God, and it comes by whatever means He sees fit (see Jeremiah 25).

The people's subservience to Babylon was part of the punishment that God had leveled against Judah, and verse 17 confirms this. **Zedekiah's rebellion represents a rebellion against the will of God.** In the end, the people of Judah were no more loyal to God than the people of Israel had been. The city of Jerusalem and the temple of God were destroyed because the Children of Israel, north and south, would not follow the Law of God. As a result, a large portion of the people of Judah were transported several hundred miles to the northeast to endure approximately seven decades of what is known as the Babylonian Exile.

Resource Packet Item 3: Making Good Decisions

Distribute the work sheet, and give students a few minutes to answer the questions, individually or in groups of two or three. Then ask a few volunteers to share their responses.

Discuss

? The words of the Old Testament prophets are often neglected on the basis that New Testament believers are "under grace." **How would you respond to someone who said the Old Testament lacks relevance for the Christian today? There are even preachers that try to direct us away from the Old Testament is irrelevant to us today.**

? What are some ways God might warn you about a particular attitude or action that needs to be removed from your life today?

? Take a moment to pray that God will show students if there be any area in their lives in need of repentance. In what specific ways might the Holy Spirit be prompting them to turn from sin and serve God faithfully?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Often people see two different Gods in the Bible. They see the Old Testament God as full of judgment and the New Testament God as full of grace. This is not an accurate picture of God. **The Children of Israel began their disobedience less than a year out of Egypt by making an idol to worship in the form of a golden calf. For more than 700 years after that event, God graciously pleaded with the Northern Kingdom to give up their idolatry. Then, for approximately another 200 years, He pleaded with Judah to do the same.** God is slow to anger and abounding in grace, but ultimately sin has to be punished. He sent His Son, Jesus, to take our punishment, but we must accept Him by faith and walk with Him to benefit from His sacrifice.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Pray that your decisions will be godly and that they will help your family and friends to walk with God.
- Look for opportunities to share the gospel with someone this week.
- Look for ways you can spend more time talking with and listening to God this week.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

A Bad Decision.

Genesis 37:13,18–28

[Gen 37:13, 18-28 KJV] 13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed [the flock] in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here [am I]. ... 18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. 20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. 21 And Reuben heard [it], and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. 22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, [but] cast him into this pit that [is] in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. 23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, [his] coat of [many] colours that [was] on him; 24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit [was] empty, [there was] no water in it. 25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry [it] down to Egypt. 26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit [is it] if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he [is] our brother [and] our flesh. And his brethren were content. 28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty [pieces] of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Tuesday:

Poor Decisions Result in Judgment.

Numbers 14:26–34

[Num 14:26-34 KJV] 26 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 27 How long [shall I bear with] this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28 Say unto them, [As truly as] I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: 29 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, 30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, [concerning] which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. 31 But your little ones, which ye said should be

a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32 But [as for] you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, [even] forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, [even] forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

Wednesday:

Avoid Seduction of Sexual Immorality.

Proverbs 7:18–27

[Pro 7:18-27 KJV] 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. 19 For the goodman [is] not at home, he is gone a long journey: 20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, [and] will come home at the day appointed. 21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it [is] for his life. 24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong [men] have been slain by her. 27 Her house [is] the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Thursday:

The Lure of Possessions.

Matthew 19:16–22

[Mat 19:16-22 KJV] 16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. 18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 19 Honour thy father and [thy] mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go [and] sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come [and] follow me. 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Consequence of Deception.

Acts 5:1–10

[Act 5:1-10 KJV] 1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back [part] of the price, his wife also being privy [to it], and brought a certain part, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and

gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried [him] out, and buried [him]. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying [her] forth, buried [her] by her husband.

Saturday:

Life in Christ.

Colossians 3:1–4

[Col 3:1-4 KJV] 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.