

Exposition of  
1 Kings 12

Sermon Series:  
Spiritual Lessons from OT Kings

Sermon Title:  
Results of Unwise Counsel  
Lesson from King Rehoboam

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this series we have been spending some time reviewing the OT Kings and seeking to draw from them spiritual lessons for us to apply to our own lives as His people.

The verse that will begin to establish the context of where we find ourselves today is in Chp. 11:11. Here, sadly we see that king Solomon who we learned of last week, whose worship was fueled by a deep love for God, who was humble and seeking wisdom not for himself but to only better serve God and God's chosen people, because of terrible backsliding and committing serious sin against the Lord will have his national covenant blessings taken from Him. This is important for us, because it shows us that the Davidic Covenant in and of itself was conditional and Solomon upon committing idolatry had invoked upon himself the consequences for such a sin which is here in v.11.

There is another covenant however which is unconditional, one that does not rest on our own merits or works and that is of course the Covenant of Grace. Interest in this covenant and receiving all of its blessings and rewards are secured only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ its surety.

Now, although Solomon forfeits his interest in the Davidic Covenant by breaking its conditions, I do believe that Solomon none the less did not lose his interest in the Covenant of Grace through faith. So, nationally and physically speaking Solomon was under the Davidic Covenant which was an extension to some degree of all the former covenants, however at the same time, Solomon 'who loved the Lord' held interest in the COG through faith in the coming Messiah, like his father.

In his later years we read his inspired words as recorded in Ecc. 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of

man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil.

Rehoboam, as far as we know is the only son of Solomon, which is rather astonishing when you consider his father had 700 wives! This, I am convinced speaks to the mighty providence of God, working in His creation to bring about His eternal decrees.

## **BODY**

### **vv.1-5 The Cause For Counsel**

v.1 Shechem is aprox. 35mi north of Jerusalem. (a place with historical significance relating to covenant commitments JOSHUA 24 and the renewal Israel's covenant with God).

v.2 Jeroboam was an Ephraimite (11:26-40)

v.4 Solomon had been very extravagant as a king and spent rather lavishly, and this required an increased taxation upon the people. Additionally, (just as the prophet Samuel warned them at the time they requested a king to be over them) Solomon had periods of forced labor (for instance the Temple).

Some expositors go as far as to say that Solomon almost ran the country into bankrupt, however I agree with many others that the text does not necessitate such a conclusion (for instance we shall shortly see there was still plenty of money around, and in fact after they declare their independency, Israel and Jeroboam their new leader begin to spend money as if it were water.

Although there was no doubt a heavy level of taxation imposed by Solomon, the nation at this point was very prosperous and most of the people did very well (in fact there are tremendous

statements made in earlier chapters regarding the prosperity of the nation). The time of peace and affluence which they had enjoyed under the reign of Solomon has really, in some measure has spoiled them, to the point that any amount of taxation annoys them considerably, because they want to possess everything that they can possibly obtain.

**The level of comfortability and personal affluence that had been experienced under Solomon, was evidently not entirely appreciated by the people and is what's really behind this 'cause for a counsel'.**

**v.5 Here is a slight indication of Rehoboam's lack of wisdom in contrast to his father Solomon. (41yrs old)**

*~Despite the great extent of Solomon's power and the might of the kingdom signified by this marriage, the following text immediately addresses a problem.*

### **v.6,7 The Value of Wise Counsel**

• 'stood before Solomon' meaning they were Solomon's advisors in some degree or another.

• **The true value of this wise counsel, I believe lies in this word 'servant'**. The Hebrew term used here emphasized actual work for another and becoming subject and available to that person or group.

These aged men knew the value of such humility. This was the character trait that God had seen in Saul (1<sup>st</sup> king) and also in David when He chose them to be kings. Now, these men were encouraging Rehoboam to exhibit that same type of humility.

It's a matter of proven record that Saul and David were strongest when they were humble.

- It's important for us to also note that the counsel the old men were urging Rehoboam to follow was grounded in and in harmony with God's revealed will. **Likewise, when seeking counsel for our lives we must first seek it from those who have God's word as their starting point.**

- It is not always true that the older a person is, the wiser they are. In fact, I know many people my senior who give truly poor counsel, which is entirely man-centered instead of oriented and guided by the light of God's word.

**Pro 16:31 The hoary head [is] a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.**

- Another interesting point regarding this counsel is that it not only advised Rehoboam of what action to take, what step to implement, but more importantly it was meant to also guide him in a quality of character which they perceived was lacking in his life.

Let us pay close attention to this example. **In our own lives people will come to us and ask 'what should I do' and so here in this picture of wise counsel we have an example which helps:**

- 1. Start with the principals and precepts of Scripture.**
- 2. Discern what character quality is needed.**
- 3. Give sound direction that would honor the name of Christ.**

*~ Rehoboam had to go in one direction or the other, and these aged men knew the action that was necessary for Rehoboam to take would require of him a Servant Leader's attitude.*

Mat 20:25 "...Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon

them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

### **v.8-11 The Tragedy of Foolish Counsel**

• ‘but he forsook the counsel of the old men’. This phrase here at the beginning of the verse indicates that the counsel Rehoboam decides upon is **not so much based on the influence of his peers as much as it is from within his own heart.** The text tells us that prior to seeking out the counsel of his peers, Rehoboam had already within his heart rejected the wise counsel.

• Wise counsel vs. Foolish counsel. Experience / Novelty, Knowledge / Ignorance, Hebrew literature represents the elderly as possessing much wisdom and it associates youth with much strength and vitality but not wisdom. Not so amazingly this what is very contrasted here before us. Aged wise men vs. Younger fools.

Scripture describes fools and foolishness in a number of ways, and sadly Rehoboam’s own father had taught these things in his proverbs where he outlined seven distinctions of foolishness that originates in the heart of men:

- 1. One who does not delight in understanding. (Prov.18:2)**
- 2. Someone who is overly confident in his/her own ability.(Prov.28:26)**
- 3. Someone who is opposed to wisdom and wise men.(Prov.10:14;12:16)**
- 4. One who rejects the fear of the Lord.(Prov.1:7)**
- 5. One who is slow, dull, nonresponsive or inactive toward wise counsel (Prov.3:25)**

**6. One who is actively wicked and divisive in their foolishness(Prov 30:32)**

**7. One who is described as ‘simple’ meaning naïve, easily enticed(Prov.1:4; 22, 32; 7:7)**

- This sort foolishness can cause great harm in a church or homes and we as Christians should not take it lightly; the price is too high, whenever it is found it must be addressed and dealt with using decisive wisdom.

- “*were grown up with him*” suggest that they were more comrades than true counselors and even though the text tells us they *‘stood before him’* and served him, they were youthful friends who lacked wisdom, still further, they may have even simply been saying what they thought would gain his friendship and favor.

~ *Rehoboam’s harsh heart and foolishness is displayed next:*

### **v.12-14 Foolish Announcement**

- **The keyword here in v.13 is “roughly” in the Hebrew meaning ‘harsh’ or ‘heavy’.** As we just observed folly can be described in many ways, but **foolishness which is harsh and intentionally heavy can be especially evil.** And this is what we plainly see in this foolish announcement which was the last thing the northern tribes of Israel and Jeroboam wanted to hear.

- “*but I will chastise you with scorpions*” OT scholars believe that Rehoboam is here referring to a particular type of whip used in those days that had sharp points dipped in poison attached to them. Again, this only serves to illustrate the foolishness and harshness

- With this foolish announcement from his own lips, Rehoboam now owns the decision he has made. Although it may not have been his initial idea, once he accepted and used the counsel, the policy became his own. **There is no excuse for the fool who accepts and then makes decisions based on unwise counsel- he and he alone must take responsibility.**

### **v.15 God's Providence**

“*For the cause was from the LORD*” This of course shows us that from a divine perspective, all these things were orchestrated to accomplish God's divine will and eternal decree (11:11; 26-40).

Reference the hand out on ‘how God executes His decrees’

### **v.16-21 End Result of Unwise Counsel**

#### **v.16 A forfeiting of covenant promises and spiritual heritage.**

- “*What portion have we in David?*” “*Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse...*” This immediate response is one of great disrespect as well as insulting to the spiritual heritage they were made part of.

Recall in our second message how that they approached King David: 2Sa 5:1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we [are] thy bone and thy flesh.

- They missed the big picture. How sad it was that they forsook the covenant promise for the sake of taxes, etc. They were not upset over violation of God's commands but only that which was a personal inconvenience to themselves.

**v.18 Loss of life by murder.** Salt on a wound. Now even more dangerous and tragic results of the unwise counsel has lead to the death of someone and the sin of murder upon the heads of those who stoned him.

**v.19 Division and separation.**

This providential separation of the tribes of Israel and Judah was never reunited. Now, our dispensational friends would like us to believe that in some future millennium there will be such a national-mass reuniting with Jerusalem as its capital, however that's not entirely accurate.

True, there will be a uniting, a gathering up, however it will be all the elect of God from the tribes of Israel, Judah and all the Gentiles of the world into Christ Jesus upon His second coming. There will not be a reuniting of all the 12 tribes (for one all their records have been destroyed) there will not be a rebuilt temple and sacrifices and Levitical law. And if there is, it is not of Christ.

Honestly, I can't figure out why some Christians who advocate such things miss the entire narrative of the OT, do they not see that these external things, even miracles performed by God's messengers the prophets were not enough to convert the Jews unto true faith in Christ the promised Messiah!

**v.20 Unlawful self appointment of a king.**

**SUMMARY APPLICATION: We must be ever so careful as a church and as a covenant community of Christian friends to practice the fruits of patience, forbearance and be longsuffering toward one another.**

## **v.22-24 God's Providence**

• *“for this thing is from me.”* The Lord has decreed both the good and the bad. (v.15)

## **v.25-33 More Dangerous Counsel & Our Own Hearts.**

v.25 Evidence of the remaining wealth and prosperity.

v.26 Complete human reasoning! Deception of his own heart.

v.28 Counselors unknown, however the results of their counsel was disastrous! For it began Israel's great downgrade which would spiral downward into complete idolatry!

v.28-33 Various laws of God are ignored and trampled upon.

Notice, the people went right along with it (an indication of their spiritual maturity).

v.33 *‘which he had devised of his own heart...’* Although Rehoboam listened to foolish friends and gave into peer pressure, however even worse Jeroboam listened to his own heart which is even more dangerous!

The heart is deceitful above all things, and can lead us away from the Lord. (Jer.17:5,9)

Jeroboam's plan may have been logical in his own mind, may have been brilliant in the eyes of political strategist, however it was not right, nor wise in light of God's command to him which was obedience (11:38).

**This teaches us, that following God's ways may at times seem self-defeating, may appear to jeopardize our understanding of success and our futures – but in reality obeying God's way secures all these things.**

## CLOSING:

In closing today's message I pray that we walk away with the understanding that no matter what station you have in the kingdom work of God (a mom, a dad, a son or daughter, a teacher or worker in the church) you will need to consciously search out WISE counsel.

Pro 12:5 ¶ The thoughts of the righteous [are] right: [but] the counsels of the wicked [are] deceit.

Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, [it is] because [there is] no light in them.

Now, this of course has many, many practical implications upon our lives in a day and age where information, messages, unsolicited counsel is seeking to tell us how think, how to act and how to raise our families, however, as disciples of Christ, **we must, by the strength of the Spirit of God grow and mature by feasting NOT primarily upon those things which are unwise, but filling our hearts and minds with the things of God that we may grow stronger in the faith.**

ESKIMO dog example.