

# THINGS GO WRONG !

When Solomon became king of Israel he got off to a great start. He followed God's ways and was famous for his great wisdom and wealth. He was the one who built God's Temple at Jerusalem.

But later in his life something went seriously wrong. One bad choice led to another bad choice, and in the end God declared he would have to remove a large part of Israel from his kingdom.

The Bible records things about people so that we can learn from their mistakes. What can we learn today from the problems Solomon got into? That's our lesson for today.

## Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your love and care for us at all times, even when times are tough during the Covid lockdown. Please help us to make the most of our opportunities and to look for ways of helping others when they are in need or are feeling down. Help us now to learn the lessons you want to teach us from the Bible so that we will live your way and make wise choices with our lives. Amen.

## The Domino Effect



If you have a set of dominoes at your place try setting them up in a line with each one standing on its end. If you push the first domino all the others will fall down one after the other.

You can see an impressive example of this using 25,000 dominoes at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFxLhrfkZsU>. We call this a "domino effect" because the fall of one domino causes the next domino to fall. Something like this happened with Solomon because one bad thing led to another.

## Solomon's Wives

It was part of the culture in Solomon's time for some people to have lots of wives, and Solomon had plenty of them. The problem was that they were from countries where they followed other gods. The God of Israel had specifically warned his special people not to marry these foreigners because of the risk that they would turn the Israelites away from the worship of the true God.

Under the influence of his wives Solomon began to build places of worship for these foreign gods and he began to follow them, so that his heart was not wholly devoted to following the God of Israel.

God was angry about this. King Solomon had disobeyed God by marrying foreign women and now he was following their foreign gods. Here's what God said to Solomon:

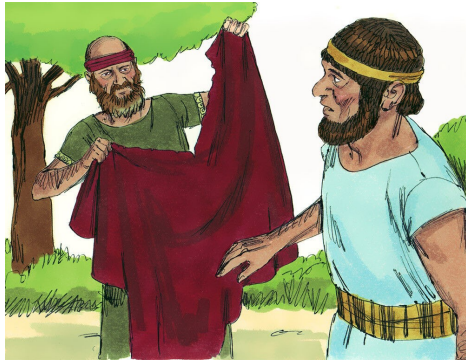
"You have chosen to break your agreement with me. You have not obeyed my commands. So I promise I will tear your kingdom away from you. I will give it to one of your officers. But I will not take it away while you are alive... I will tear it away from your son when he becomes king. But I will not tear away all the kingdom from him. I will leave him one tribe to rule. I will do this because of David, my servant. And I will do it because of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen."

*(1 Kings 11:11-13)*

# Jeroboam gets a strange message

Jeroboam was one of Solomon's officers. Because of his ability he was given an important job.

While walking on a road outside of Jerusalem he was met by the prophet Ahijah. This man took his new coat and tore it into twelve pieces, each piece representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel. "Take for your-



self ten of these pieces," said the prophet, "because God says he will tear the kingdom from Solomon and will give you ten tribes. This is because Solomon has stopped following me. He worships foreign gods and has not obeyed my laws and commands. I will therefore make you to be the next King over Israel."

The prophet continued this message from God, "I will not take away the entire kingdom. I will still leave one tribe to Solomon's son. I will do this so that David, my servant, will always have a king before me in Jerusalem. It is the city where I chose to be worshiped."

# Jeroboam leads Israel away from God

When Solomon's son Rehoboam became king he imposed harsh demands on the people of Israel, ignoring the advice of his older counsellors. This led to a rebellion by the people in the northern tribes of Israel, and instead of accepting Rehoboam they chose Jeroboam to be their king. Rehoboam was left with one tribe to reign over, called Judah. It was in the land allocated to Judah that the Temple of God was located.

The original twelve tribes of Israel were now split into two separate kingdoms, called "Israel" in the north with ten tribes and "Judah" in the south with just one tribe.

Jeroboam was worried that the people in the north would turn back to Rehoboam if they continued to visit the Temple in Jerusalem for their religious sacrifices. So he made two golden calves and said to the people, "It is too hard for you to go to Jerusalem to worship. Israel, here are your gods who brought you out of Egypt." He put the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, which were in places he controlled among his ten northern tribes. He also appointed priests who were not from the tribe of Levi as God had commanded.

All these things were a great sin in God's eyes, and this rejection of God's commands began a slide into idolatry in the northern ten tribes from which the kingdom never recovered. The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were never reunited and were sometimes at war with each other.

All this came about because of Solomon's choice to disobey God when he married foreign wives and began to worship their foreign gods. It was a major turning point in Bible history.

*(Based on 1 Kings chapters 11 and 12)*

## Activities

- (1) Have a go at the questions and the crossword puzzle on the handout.
- (2) Print off the handout about a coat and tear up the coat into 12 pieces. Then write the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on these pieces. You might need to look up Genesis 35:23-26 to get the names of all of these tribes. They are named after the 12 sons of Jacob whose families grew into separate tribes. Note that Jacob's name was later changed to Israel (Genesis 35:10).
- (3) Which tribes went to Jeroboam and which one went to Rehoboam? The tribe of Levi didn't have an allocation of land as this was the tribe of priests. These people were looked after by all of the other tribes.