

A Kingdom Divided
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Today we are talking about choices.

It's a good topic for the New Year – Maybe you've thought about what choices you want to make differently in 2015 than you did in 2014...we call these New Year's resolutions

The Story video that you just saw talks about choices that kings and leaders made that caused all kinds of issues for the people of Israel

Most of all, it talks about kings who made the wrong choices in their lives and the consequences of those choices...of turning away from God

Remember how God didn't want to give his people a king – we talked about this several weeks ago

God pleads with the Hebrews and said, **“Let me be your King – cause I am better than any human king you will ever have!”**

But the people made another choice – the opposite choice from what God asked them to do -, and demanded to have a human king so they could be “like all the other nations”

So God relents and gives them a human king. We could talk all day about the interplay between God's sovereignty (his being in charge of all things) and free will of human beings and how the two interact.

Simply put, it's the lower story vs. the upper story. God's plans are still always accomplished, but we may not be a part of the outcome of God's plan if we choose against God's will for us

So now we are at the point in THE STORY where the people's choice for a human king– (against God's advice) - starts to really mess up – just like God predicted...

David is really the last good king for a while

King David had messed up too, but he always came back to the Lord – God was always central in his life, and he always loved God with all his heart

One of the interesting things to learn here is that God doesn't evaluate us on the basis of what we do wrong

Because he is a God of forgiveness and grace

And he doesn't remember our sins when we repent

But he does require that we love him first, beyond all else and that we worship him alone...

What commandment was the greatest commandment according to Jesus? Anyone know? **"Hear O Israel, the Lord Your God is one God, and you shall worship the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your strength, and all of your mind."**

David did that – despite his sins – he always came back to God – God was always first in his life even when he made dumb choices – and God being first, always helped get him back on track...

Solomon – David's son – started this way also

Solomon is the one who wrote the book of Proverbs in the Bible – full of wisdom

It's always been interesting to me to think about the fact that after David had the affair with Bathsheba and the first child born to them dies, the next child born to them (after the death of the first one) to David and Bathsheba - was indeed Solomon Solomon who represents wisdom

It's like God telling David in his own way – that was sure a stupid move David you made with Bathsheba, murdering Uriah her husband to get her to sleep with you – let me give you some Wisdom

So Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba – the son who lived Again God is in there turning David's sin into a blessing for all of us – we would not have the book of Proverbs in Scripture if it wasn't for Solomon – again its like God shouting out to the human race – stop making stupid choices...get wisdom

Early on, when Solomon took the throne after David died, he was faithful to the Lord and asked for wisdom instead of riches

The Lord was pleased with this request and gave Solomon wisdom but also blessed him with riches as well – and it was good for a while

At first Solomon put God first – he worshiped the Lord only

But later in his reign Solomon made some wrong choices, and drifted away from the Lord

He became influenced by the surrounding culture and set up other shrines to other gods

1 Kings 11:9 states the following:

"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will

most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it, during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

So in a nutshell here is what happens

Solomon was involved in huge building projects and he wanted his kingdom to grow And people were forced to work under the thrash of the whip – Solomon was a fierce task master

So, when Solomon dies - a division occurs in the kingdom because Rehoboam, Solomon's son tries to take over his father's reign. He is the natural successor.

However, Rehoboam makes a wrong choice again – he doesn't listen to wise counsel.

If I have learned anything in my time here as your senior Pastor it is to listen to the leaders here in this church. It is so important for anyone in leadership to get wise counsel.

I can't tell you the number of times one of you has come to me and said "You know... don't do it this way. I think we would be better off if you took a different approach." And I've been so grateful for that. As a leader wise counsel is so important.

So in Rehoboam's case, the elders tell him, "You know Rehoboam, your father was a fierce task master. 1 Kings 12:7 says **"If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and (lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke), they will always be your servants."**

I think that was pretty good advice, don't you?

But Rehoboam, Solomon's son doesn't listen and does the opposite.

Look at this doozy of quote from **1 Kings 12:10-11** **"...Tell these people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter; --tell them, "My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."**

Talk about a power trip! Nice guy huh?

And that is exactly what Rehoboam did. And you can guess what happened, right? The people of the north rebelled against him.

Ironic because Solomon himself wrote in the book of **Proverbs 11:4** – **"For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure."** OR **Proverbs 12:15** **"The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."**

Rehoboam had all the advice he needed but he refused it. He made the wrong choice. So the people revolted and made Jeroboam king over the north – he had actually earlier been anointed by a prophet to be king – he had originally been one of Solomon’s subordinates.

And Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, only salvages for himself and for his rule the tribe of Judah and Benjamin.

Anyway now as you read THE STORY know that...

JEROBOAM will be king in the NORTH – THE NORTHERN KINGDOM WILL BE CALLED **ISRAEL (10 tribes)**

REHOBAM will be king in the SOUTH – THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM WILL BE CALLED **JUDAH (with Benjamin – two tribes)**

(By the way it was real popular back then to put “boam” at the end of a name. Kind of like what we do today with y or ey – carley, Sammy, jordey, molly – back then it was boam).

So starting in chapter 14 of the Story on through chapter 17 we are going to read about the series of kings who ruled over these two nations.

God is constantly dealing with them, trying to get them to come around, threatening punishment, calling them back, disciplining these nations, trying to get their attention...and this is much of the content of this section.

JUST KNOW:

ALL OF THE KINGS IN THE NORTH WERE BAD (ISRAEL)

MOST OF THE KINGS IN THE SOUTH ARE JUST AS BAD. *Out of the 38 kings who follow Solomon in the south all but five of them do bad stuff.*

So many poor choices, bad decisions, wrong directions are involved in this section – and cause this split in the kingdom.

Read about them

And what I want you to know today, in this New Year 2015 is that **OUR CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES**

Sometimes OUR CHOICES HAVE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

Good and bad.

Do you see how David’s good choice to put God first in his life ALWAYS ALWAYS continues down through the generations in terms of God honoring him, and eventually having Jesus come from the lineage of David?

God even said to Solomon...because of your father I am not going to rip the kingdom from you during your lifetime.

Making the right choices, doing the right thing, has ripple effects down the generations that we can’t even fathom.

That’s what scripture tells us.

Our poor decisions have consequences too. Sometimes those consequences are immediate.

Sometimes they don't show up for years

But the way that God has worked this all out, and what we see in the book of Kings, is that our choices

matter a lot...they affect the people around us...and they affect our relationship to God

We can't undo some of the poor choices we have already made

But we can admit that they were poor decisions and we can apologize to those who are living in the consequences of those decisions

We can also use them as teaching tools to teach future generations on how to make wiser choices than we did

In fact my kids love to hear all about how I've messed up...they like to hear about my failures way more than my successes...what is that about?...sharing your failures with kids is so important and then also giving them wisdom about how they might be able to do it better than you did – so important...

But it's also important to look forward...

Today in this new year 2015 it's good to think about our future choices...what will you value most in this year 2015?

How will you spend your time?

What will you dedicate your life to?

What will be your motivation, your drive, your source of inspiration?

All these will be determined by the choices you make – and maybe you will decide to make some different choices than you did in 2014...Of course

I hope your answer to these questions has something to do with serving and following Jesus first, making the necessary sacrifices, living your life to honor God as the primary one in your life – You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind – and what that looks like will be amazing

Remember though...that

Your choices no matter how big or how small...matter to others...they have a ripple effect down through the generations...that you can't even fathom

And they matter to God

I want to share with you this little video I found to drive home the point called **A million little choices**. (YOU TUBE)

After this our new intern Sookjah Han will get up and share with you the different kinds of choices that she made after God got ahold of her life...