

1 Kings 12:25-33

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Date: 10 April 2024

[0:00] 1 Kings chapter 12, we're going to finish up the 12th chapter and we have our business meeting stuff tonight too. So hopefully you got that stuff when you came in. Sean has done a great job of trying to keep things together for us.

So we'll get to that at the end. But let's go ahead and pray. And then we'll just get right into our text together. Let's pray. Lord, we're so thankful to have the opportunity of being together.

So thankful to spend time in fellowship with one another. Thankful just to be encouraged through our midweek service. Thank you for those that are here. Lord, I pray that you be with us now as we open up your word and that your word would speak to our hearts and minds.

Lord, as always, help us not just to learn the truths as they pertain to history, but Lord, help us to learn who you are, more of your character, but also more of what you expect of us and your calling upon us, Lord, in our lives.

We pray for all those working with our children in the back. We pray for all the work that's going on from the youngest to the oldest in the back, from the teenagers to the nursery. Lord, we pray that Christ be glorified and honored.

[0:56] And you be with those students and be with the teachers as well. Just in all ways and all manners, just be glorified. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. First Kings chapter 12, we got last week up through verse 24.

Well, it was Sunday night. So we're starting in verse 25. And we'll go to the end of the chapter, which gets us to verse 33. Let's put it in proper context.

Solomon has died. And his son Rehoboam is on the throne. Rehoboam, if you remember, Solomon's peril of a divided heart.

Really, he loved the Lord, first Kings chapter three, but he also loved many foreign women. Same wording intentionally used there. We find that first Kings chapter 11. And he had this divided heart, wasn't completely committed to the Lord, his God.

And the outcome of that was that there is a divided kingdom. Solomon's son sits upon a throne. Rehoboam, Rehoboam is confronted by Jeroboam, which is one of the adversaries that God raised up to Solomon.

[2:01] Long story short, that's in the 12th chapter beginning, 12th chapter. Rehoboam fails to listen to the counsel of the men who served with his father, but rather sought the counsel of the people who grew up with him, his friends.

And we could say that he just made a bad choice, but we also saw the sovereignty in this. If you were here Sunday night, you know that we looked at this wrestling between the free will of man and the sovereignty of God and how there's things that we won't ever understand.

But it says that this was of the Lord, that he chose the counsel of the young men. And he said, you know, I'm going to reign harder. Well, Jeroboam leads the 10 tribes, northern tribes in a revolt.

So they make Jeroboam king in what is now called Israel. Rehoboam is serving in Judah, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Even though we see that now Jeroboam is king of the 10 northern tribes. Now, that's where we got this great history door that swings open for the nation of Israel.

[3:09] One thing that we paid attention to, though, and this is where it gets us to where we're at now. OK, so we got it in context. Many years prior to this or several years prior to this, before Jeroboam made his way into Egypt, a prophet had told him that God would give him the kingdom, that he was going to take the kingdom out of the hand of David, but he was going to give David's descendants, but he was going to, for the sake of David, allow to remain and that Jeroboam would reign.

So this prophet of the Lord makes this declaration. For all sakes and purposes, that's where the work of God stops with Jeroboam. We'll see in just a moment.

OK, but I want you to hold on to that promise. That God had declared him that he would give him the kingdom and that if he walked in faithfulness, that he would establish his name and establish his throne and those things of that nature.

And we'll pick it up in just a minute. But notice that when they make him king, 1 Kings chapter 12, there's no priest, there's no anointing, and there's no worship.

OK, so this really is an active man. They take him and make him king. Though God said these things would happen, this is not blessed of the Lord, so to say, the way David was anointed by Samuel and even the way Saul was anointed by Samuel, they just choose this man and say, we're going to make him king.

[4 : 33] And it's all of man. There's no priest present. There's no anointing. Oh, so he's not the anointed. None of that. None of that ever happens in the northern kingdom. OK, which is kind of where we're at now.

So he's made king. And we're going to pick it up there in verse 25 and then read to the end of the chapter. We'll start, we leave the southern tribes for just a minute because we're going to pay attention to what's going on in the north.

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Peniel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their Lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah. And they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.

So the king consulted and made two golden calves. And he said to them, it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.

[5 : 32] He set one in Bethel and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. And he made houses on high places and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

And Jeroboam instituted a feast on the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah. And he went up to the altar. Thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made.

And he stationed in Bethel the priest of the high places which he had made. And then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart.

And he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense. And we'll stop right there now. And admittedly, we're stopping halfway through an account that continues on into the thirteenth chapter.

But if we were to continue on, then we would be here much longer than time is allotted to us. Because we really begin to see this prophet who becomes a picture of rebellious Israel and things of that nature.

[6 : 38] But anyway, so we stop right here with this kind of instituted faith or religion of the nation of Israel. And just like the sin of Solomon and the division of the kingdom began kind of the disciplinarian action of God, these things do not lie outside the hand of a sovereign God.

Now we say this, we're leading to one of God's great disciplinarian actions in the Babylonian captivity.

Okay? When we're reading historical works, at least for me, I like to see kind of an overview so that I know where we're going. God is going to discipline his people.

It's going to take a number of years. And the disciplinarian action is the Babylonian captivity. And I've said this time and time again because that is so instrumental in our understanding of the historical words of the Old Testament.

This phrase that I know I've repeated it quite often, but we need to understand it. They went into the Babylonian captivity, one of the most polytheistic nations. They came out the most monotheistic nations.

[7 : 46] Okay? They go into captivity worshiping many gods. They come out of it worshiping only one. And to this day, the Jewish people are still one of the most monotheistic nations.

Now I'm not saying that they're believers. They're born-again believers. I'm not saying that. But as far as the polytheism, worshiping multitude of gods, that is taken care of in Babylonian captivity.

Now the reason I pay so much attention to this just in history is because this is very similar to what we see Paul declaring in Romans 9, 10, 11.

Now we've got New Testament application where it says that when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, God will begin to work on his people. And then he will call the Jewish nation back to himself. That's what it says in Romans 9, 10, 11.

That God is going to call the nation of Israel back to himself. Many people believe this is the restoration of the nation on faith terms. That there will be redemption of God's people. And one of the tools that he does that, if you continue reading in your New Testament, would be what we refer to as the years of tribulation in the book of Revelation.

[8 : 54] So we see this is a consistent pattern of God. God disciplining his people in order to restore them. Remember that saying, that verse that is there in the Old Testament. God strikes to heal.

Okay, God isn't just being mean, big God. Oh, you didn't obey me, so boom, we're going to. No, discipline is for the purpose of restoration. So we need to know how we got there.

These things, what we see happening, while God is not ordaining them, that is, he is not dictating that they happen, God knows they're going to happen and he's allowing them.

Some people call it the permissive will of God, right? These are things that are inside the heart of man that are now being played out on a historical stage.

And God will be just in his discipline. And what we see, beginning very quickly with Jeroboam, because the northern tribes, by the way, they go south really quick.

[9 : 55] I mean, they get really wicked. When we start going through the list of the kings, these are the kings that do wicked in the sight of the Lord their God. We have a lot of wicked kings in the southern tribe, but we have more righteous ones that do right in the sight of the Lord their God like their father David did.

So there's an example. So how did they go south so quick? They fall first to the Assyrians a couple hundred years before, or not a couple hundred years, but several years before the southern kingdom falls to the Babylonians.

So God's discipline is expedited for the northern tribes. But yet it was God who took the tribes away, right? That he allowed it to happen. He was using it because he wanted to show kind of what was in the heart.

He gave them the opportunity. So now, I just want you to see really quickly, if we can, so we can get to the business, the fallacy of man-made religion. Because what you have here is man-made religion.

It's the fallacy of man-made religion. This, by the way, is something that even Jesus confronted in his time. When Jesus is walking through Samaria, he meets the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman at the well.

[11 : 09] Remember that? In the day of Christ, the Jewish people so despised the Samaritans that they would go well outside their way, add a number of days to their travel, just not to walk through the land. But Jesus said, I must go through Samaria.

And he met a woman at the well, Samaritan woman at the well. You know the account. But one of the things that he was confronting, it was worship, right? Because she said, you people say that Jerusalem is where you worship, but we say that you worship here.

It's the same thing. That's in the northern tribes. The kind of, that's the same region here. It was the place of Jacob's well. And he was really confronting what true worship is. Jesus said, the time is coming where you will neither worship there nor here, but you will worship in spirit and truth.

Truth, right? So it's a departure from the truth is where we get into this man-made religion. And it's something that is even so rampant today, and it's something that is really doing, having the same effect, the same fallacies that we see laid out for us here are the same things that we see going on in our day and time now.

As the book of Ecclesiastes says, it really is nothing new under the sun. So what we see is just four, and we'll make our way through it quick. Number one, every man-made religion is rooted in self-focused concern.

[12 : 25] Every man-made religion is rooted in self-focused concern. Every one of them. It says, now, Jeroboam built Shechem. Now, Shechem is where Rehoboam went to have his coronation service.

Shechem was the place where Abraham first built an altar in the land of Canaan long before he possessed it and cried out to the name of the Lord his God for the first time. So it's the very first time God's glory was ever declared in the land of Canaan.

Shechem is also the place right there. You have the Mount of Blessing and the Mount of Curse. But he didn't just build it. He built it up. He fortified it. He made it his capital city. And he lived there. So Jeroboam says, if I'm going to be king, I'm going to have a capital that equals Jerusalem, though it never does equal Jerusalem.

So he fortifies his city. And then it says, he also went and built Peniel. Now, you need to understand, Peniel is on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Now, what is he doing? He's fortifying both sides of the river.

And he's going to have a stronghold on each side. Because he doesn't want the river to be this natural geographic boundary for them to go down to Jerusalem. He's going to have a place over there, a place over here. He's going to hold the kingdom together the best he can.

[13:30] So he's doing this. He's doing what kings should do. But then it comes to his mind. He says, well, wait a minute. He says, the people will go back to the house of David when they go worship.

And he knew this reality that to this point, though he has a capital city in Shechem, he has a fortified city on the other side of the Jordan River in Peniel, he knows that the only place to worship at that time is Jerusalem.

And he knows there's a temple in Jerusalem. And he knows that that's where the center of worship for all the land is. Now, this is something that God had declared in the book of Deuteronomy. So he says, well, I can't allow that to happen.

So he starts this, really, man-made religion. He says, we've got to fix this problem. I don't want them to go back because it will go back. You know, their hearts will be turned back to Rehoboam.

Then they'll kill me and they'll take me out of this. Notice what he's doing here. First of all, he is disregarding everything God had told him. God said, I'll make you king. He thought he was king because he deserved to be king or he earned the right to be king.

[14:34] God had told him years before, you're going to be king. And God said, if you're faithful to me, I'll make sure you stay king. I'll build your house. I'll establish your house just like the house of David, right? He disregards that.

He begins to think the only way I can hold this kingdom together is with strong cities and a centralized worship. So, he does that. So, let's not think, let's not fool ourselves that Jeroboam really has good intentions of wanting to be a king of worshiping people.

No, he's doing this because he wants to make sure the people don't go back to Jerusalem. And everything he does, it tells us he does it after the desires of his own heart.

All man-made religion is really rooted in self-concern. It is whatever is better for me. And if you look at world religions as a whole, cults, religions, practices, and you take them back to their origination, every one of them are rooted in self-concern.

What's good for me? There's only one faith in which the founder of that faith willingly laid down his life, though he was innocent, that he gave himself in that place and told his followers to expect the same thing.

[15:58] Only one, and that's Christianity. Every other one is rooted in self-concern. There's, I mean, you can look at the spread of religion, and most of them were spread in the name of faith of something for economic purposes.

Self-concern. That's exactly what Jeroboam's doing. He's doing whatever is after his own heart, and he's wanting to maintain the kingdom. So how does it happen so quickly? Because it's rooted in self-concern or self-focus.

And the second thing we notice is it relies upon a God-given desire. It relies upon a God-given desire. So Jeroboam says, I've got a problem.

I don't want the people going over there. So he started this religion. He started this faith. And we'll get to just a minute, the similarities of it. But what he was relying on, he wanted to centralize the people.

He wanted to have everybody kind of going in the same direction. He was relying on the fact that God had put the desire to worship in the heart of every man. Have you ever noticed that?

[17:06] He was relying upon the fact because he had the strong cities. He had Shechem. He had Peniel. He had one on each side of the river. But he knew in his heart when the people go to

worship.

See, notice the question never was if the people go to worship. It was when the people go to worship. They're going to go back to Jerusalem. Because just like we, Jeroboam knew that God had set in the heart of every man a desire to worship.

All people of all places at all times worship something. They do. Either worship self or stuff or some God.

Lowercase g. Or the true God. But worship is the natural tendency. And the reason we know this is we have to go all the way back to creation. The book of Genesis.

Remember in the book of Genesis. And I told you that you need to study Genesis to rightly understand the rest of scripture. Because Genesis is the Genesis. It is the beginning. And it's there in the beginning for a purpose.

[18:10] And we find every problem man has in the first 11 chapters of the book of the Bible. Genesis 1 through 11. Every problem man has. And then we find God's response to man's problems. Sure. But we also find why God created man.

And we find the purpose that God designed man. And the divine purpose of God's design for us is that we may worship and obey him. That's our whole purpose.

And so man's whole ambition. Mankind. Not just men in general. Mankind's whole ambition is to worship. And that's a natural God-given desire.

And man-made religion is based upon it. It is relying upon the fact that people are going to worship. And you just have to convince them to worship the right thing.

And what Jeroboam is doing. He says these people have a desire to worship. So I'm going to meet that desire in a convenient way. By the way, be careful of convenient faith.

[19:15] Right? He looked at me and said, oh, it's too far for you to go to Jerusalem. So we're going to bring it closer to you. But we notice in the text it says, but they went and worshiped these gods as far as Dan. By the way, they had to go much further to go to Dan than they would have had to go to Jerusalem.

But he gave the impression, you don't want to go there. Right? What was he doing? He said, I know you have this natural God-given desire to worship. So I want to provide you with an easy opportunity to do it.

One thing that we notice when we study man-made religions is their appeal to convenience and expediency.

Now, sure, we can take it to extremes. Well, some of them aren't very expedient or convenient. Some of them require, you know, even martyrdom of their own faith. And we get that. But we see here that it is this reliant upon the fact that you're going to worship.

And that's okay. We need to understand that. You're created to worship. I'm created to worship. And God has wired that within us. Jeroboam and everyone else that relies upon these man-made religions take that God-given desire and twist it for personal gain.

[20:26] The third thing we notice is not only is it rooted in self-focused concern, it relies upon a God-given desire. Here's the dangerous thing.

It replaces the authentic with a copy. A very close copy. But a copy. So Jeroboam knew that in Jerusalem there's a temple.

That temple had priests. It had an altar. It had the Holy of Holies. It had the cherubim there over the, in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies.

It had all these things. He knew that there were objects that were connected with it, though these weren't objects of adoration or worship. Things that were inside the temple, everything God had commanded to be built.

So he knew if he was going to ask the people to worship, he couldn't just say, hey, you can worship here. He had to give them something to worship. So he says he consulted. We don't know who he consulted with. Some translators think it means he just thought to himself.

[21:31] And he built two golden calves. Now, all of a sudden, we should go back and say, well, he's directly connecting himself to at least someone that is of notable prominence among the nation of Israel.

So that is with Aaron, because Aaron built a golden calf, too, at the foot of Mount Sinai. There's difference in opinions in Bible scholars of, are these really golden calves or is this just kind of how you explain them?

Because the most common interpretation is that these are mimics or copies of the cherub that were on either side of the Ark of the Covenant, but with the head of a cow.

Weaned creatures. And since there were two inside the Holy of Holies, he built two as well, but he divided them. He split them up. And the reason he split them up is because if they're together, everybody's going to expect to see the Ark of the Covenant in between them.

And, you know, he doesn't have that. So what we see is he's at least getting close. He's copying. Because that's what man-made religion does, right? It gets so near the truth that it almost looks true.

[22 : 41] Satan doesn't always come to you with an out-and-out lie. He comes to you with a half-truth or a twisted truth. And those are the dangerous things. So he constructs these, and he puts them, one at Dan and one at Bethel.

Now, the one at Bethel, by the way, if you were on your way to Jerusalem to go worship in Jerusalem, you had to go through Bethel. That was on the road.

So you say, well, I can worship here because part of these holy relics are here too. Or if you wanted to go to Dan. Dan should not surprise us because even when we were studying the book of Judges, we remembered or we noted that Dan is the birthplace of idolatry among the people of Israel.

They're the first tribe to introduce idolatry. Dan's a good place to put it because the Danites, remember this? Go all the way back to the book of Judges in your mind. They have their own priest up there. Remember that guy they got from the house of the son who stole the money from his mom?

And then he went and said, oh, by the way, mom, I stole your money. And then they took the money and they made an auto out of it. And this priest was trying. You'd have to go back and read it in the book of Judges. I know it's all kind of messed up. But the Danites are going north and they want more land.

[23 : 46] And they stop at this house and they're like, oh, they got a priest here. So they take him and now he's a priest of their own tribe. Sounds real good, right? And so they have this priest up in Dan and his family's there. So, hey, we'll stick a golden calf up there too.

And so it's putting it really in these two places. There's one in the north and one in the southern portion of this northern region here. And they're located where it's convenient for every one of you. But what we do now, they've replaced the authentic with a copy.

God has said there's only one place you should worship. That's in Jerusalem. God has declared what should be in the temple that was in Jerusalem. He's given the pattern. But yet now Jeroboam has made this copy.

But that's not enough. Because he says they go to a place in Jerusalem. So he constructs high houses or high places. He doesn't build a temple. But he has high places because he knows people need to go to a house of worship.

And then he needs priests. But none of the Levites came with Jeroboam because they all stayed down in Jerusalem. Because that's where the temple is. And their livelihood was based upon the temple.

[24 : 48] So Jeroboam, it says, he made priests out of anybody. Some translations say of the lowest class of people. He didn't care who you were. You want to be a priest?

Okay, let's go. And he put priests at these high places next to these golden calves. And we're getting real close to the real. Because we have priests.

We have a house. And we have, you know, golden calves. But then he realizes that in Jerusalem they have festivals. The festival which Solomon prayed at and dedicated the house of the temple at was on the 15th day of the seventh month.

It was the Feast of Booths, if you remember. Or the Feast of Tabernacles. Same festival. So Jeroboam decides we're not going to do it on the 15th day of the seventh month.

We're going to do it on the 15th day of the eighth month. Some people think it's because the northern region of Israel has a higher elevation. Therefore their crops came in later. And say, well, it's a month later before our crops come in.

[25 : 52] We'll do it there. I think it's because that's what month it was because it says then Jeroboam went and dedicated the temple. But it tells us the reality is it's because that was the desire of his heart. He wanted to get so close that it looked real.

It felt right. But it wasn't right. Because, see, this is what man-made religion does. It always replaces the authentic with the copy.

You can still go through the same motion. You can still go through the same effort gene. You can still have some of the same things in place. But God did not ordain any of this. Remember, the real reason this is going on is because Jeroboam doesn't want to lose his rule.

Even though God had already told him he would keep him king. Man is going to great lengths. Now, last thing, and then we'll do our business. It's rooted in self-focus.

It's relying upon a God-given desire. It replaces the authentic with a copy. Here's what you need to know because this is the beginning of it. It results in a greater downfall of society.

[26 : 58] The reason the northern kingdom falls so much sooner is because of this.

The natural results of man-made religion is the downfall of society. When man gets to set the standard for what worship looks like, society suffers.

Jeroboam did this to ensure that the people never went back to Rehoboam. That never happened.

He did this so that the hearts of the people would never return back to Jerusalem.

They never did. He did this so that the kingdom would never be reunited, and it never was. Now, in the eyes of God, it's always the same because you look at the prophets that are throughout this period of the divided kingdom.

God's always causing them to build altars with 12 stones. He's always calling them to do things with the number 12 because 12 is the whole number, right? God doesn't see they're divided by man, but God is dealing with his people universally.

[28 : 02] He's dealing with the one nation, the one people. But what never happens historically is they all go into captivity. They fall short. They're divided when they fall. So ultimately, we can say Jeroboam got what he wanted.

But what he wanted was catastrophic to a number of people because their idolatry will bring the judgment of God upon the nation.

The Assyrians, you go read the book of Habakkuk, right? The prophet Habakkuk is prophesying at this time how God is using the Assyrians and Haggai.

No, it's Habakkuk. Not Haggai. But God's having this conversation, and Habakkuk is talking about who God is going to bring as a judgment tool.

And God says, I'm going to bring the Assyrians out and use them. And by the way, if you're a pastor's wife, if you ever want to know what your pastor's wife's favorite Bible verse is, I'm going to tell you, she's not in here right now, okay?

[29 : 06] It's the last three verses of the book of Habakkuk. Strange, huh? Though the fields be barren and the barns be empty. I'm paraphrasing.

Though the produce fail and the cows quit calving, yet I will praise him. Because what's going on, the prophet Habakkuk says, God's judgment is going to so render the land destroyed, he's going to bring us to a place of desperation where we have to praise him.

Right? This is what Habakkuk is seeing. The reason he sees it is because of this. They turned their back on God. They wanted to do things their own way. They wanted to live out their own life.

They wanted to set the standards of their own worship. They wanted to do it in their own motions.

And they got very close to the truth, but they wanted to do it their own way. And in the end, they forsook the Lord their God.

And it resulted in the catastrophic downfall of society. It's never what it once was. Even in the time of Christ, go back to why they won't walk through Samaria.

[30 : 21] The Assyrians, when they took over a land, they didn't kill everybody. Okay? So the way the Assyrians came in, when the Assyrians would take over the land, they would displace you.

So they would take you from your land and move you over here to this other portion of land that they had conquered. And they'd bring people from that land and put it in your land. And so they would do that on purpose.

They would, they didn't want anybody, one nation to be reborn because they were together. So they would disperse you. Right? And so that's what happens in Samaria. They did it in that region in particular around Bethel and Samaria because they didn't want a pure Israeli race there.

So the Assyrians brought in this mixed multitude of people from all over to serve as a buffer between the southern kingdom of Judah and the now Assyrian land. And that's why even in the time of Christ, I mean, you're looking way after.

Even in the time of Christ, they're not, they're never restored. They're, they're always seen as, even today, by the way, you look at all the warfares and everything that's going on, still a result of that. [31 : 30] That, that mixed multitude that's there. And so what we find going on is that this man made religion really, really results in a downfall of society.

It's telling. I read a book recently, I know, I've said it to you and I'll say this in closing. The gentleman's out of India and in the book, and I've recommended so many people, and I know it's, it's not a very exciting read, but it's a very good read.

It's the book that made your world. So it's a, an Eastern hemisphere individual looking into the Western hemisphere telling you the impact of the Bible upon your world.

Someone outside of your area. He's a believer. But he speaks of the reality like, you know, the Europeans weren't the first ones to invent a wheel or even gears.

No, they were the first ones to utilize gears for the ease of society. He said, the reality is that Hindu monks had gears and wheels in their revolving bookshelves centuries before they were ever used.

[32 : 41] Because they thought the hum of the grinding of the wheels would send them in a trance. And they would daily sit there and listen to the grinding of these gears. It wasn't until a society influenced by the Bible that said we ought to relieve the suffering of the least of those among us that said, you know what?

We can use that gear and make farm implements out of them. Because your faith really has a direct impact on your society.

You're either using it for personal benefit or you're using it to glorify God through every aspect of your life. What we find going on with Jeroboam, he just wanted to preserve his kingdom.

What happened is he led to the destruction of that society that he was existing in. And we see that being opened up for us here in 1 Kings 12, 25 through 33. Thank you, my brothers.

Thank you. Thank you.

[35 : 05] Thank you.

Thank you.