

## Parallels From History - King Solomon

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When King Solomon died, his young son, Rehoboam, succeeded him to the throne. If Solomon was the wisest man to ever live, his son certainly did not inherit his Father's intelligence.

According to some estimates, Solomon's magnificent empire was sustained by taxes exceeding 50% of the Gross National Product! In addition to this, the people paid the required tithes and offerings to God. It is easy to understand why the working people rebelled against Rehoboam's arrogance and insolence. He foolishly announced that he planned to raise taxes again! (1 Kings 12)

The tribes of Israel revolted and eventually, Rehoboam's dominion was reduced to 17% of his former kingdom. The breakaway tribes, ten tribes located in the north, were called Israel and they chose one of Solomon's former officials, Jeroboam, to be their king. The two southern tribes, which included Jerusalem, were called Judah and was governed by a humiliated Rehoboam for about 18 years.

After the nation was divided, **"Jeroboam thought to himself, 'The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their Lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.'** After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, **'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'** One he set up in Bethel [the southern part of Israel], and the other in Dan [the northern part of Israel]. **And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah [Feast of Tabernacles was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month], and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings. -"**

By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. He cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord: "O altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David.

On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'" That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he

stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back.

Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord. Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the Lord, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before. - (1 Kings 12:26-13:6, insertions mine)

About 170 years after King Jeroboam died, God sent His servant, Isaiah, to tell Israel *and Judah* that God was preparing destruction for both kingdoms unless they repented of their corporate apostasy. Isaiah began his ministry at a time when God was particularly angry with Israel, the northern part of the kingdom.

Israel had stubbornly refused to listen to any of God's servants and did not turn away from the evils initiated by Jeroboam. God even required Isaiah to remove his sackcloth and sandals and walk around totally naked for three years. Still, God's messenger and message were ignored. (Isaiah 20)

Finally, God's patience ceased and He sent, Shalmaneser V, Assyria's king to destroy the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. From the time of Jeroboam's death to the extinction of the ten tribes was a mere 188 years.

After the northern tribes were destroyed, Isaiah's ministry continued in Judah for almost 40 years. Every citizen knew about Isaiah and his warning message, but few gave it any heed. About 40 years after Isaiah's death, the prophecy he gave to Jeroboam was fulfilled.

Josiah became king of Judah when he was only 8 years old. His evil father, King Amon, was assassinated by court officials at age 24, after serving as king of Judah for only two years. (Evidently, Amon was about 16 when Josiah was born.)

The officials who were responsible for Amon's assassination were subsequently caught and executed for their deed, so the people made Josiah, the little heir of Amon, their king.

When Josiah was 26 years old, a copy of the writings of Moses was discovered while the temple was being renovated.

Shaphan, the king's secretary, took the manuscript to Josiah and he read the words of Moses to the king. **"When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest . . . 'Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.'**"

Hilkiah the priest . . . went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son

of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. She said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, 'This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read.

Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.'

Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord.

Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'" So they took her answer back to the king." (2 Kings 22:11-20)

The Lord's message to the king was bitter sweet. Josiah was relieved to learn that God's anger would not be released during his lifetime, but Josiah was deeply saddened that God's anger still burned against His people and that someday they would be destroyed. **"Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets – all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar [where Solomon had once stood] and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant. -**

The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the Lord all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts.

He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel [where Jeroboam started the apostasy]. **He did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem – those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the Lord to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, which were in the temple of the Lord and where women did weaving for Asherah. -**

Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the shrines at the

gates – at the entrance to the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which is on the left of the city gate.

Although the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests. He desecrated [the sacred site of] **Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech. He removed from the entrance to the temple of the Lord the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melech. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun. He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the Lord. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. -**

The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption – the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the people of Ammon.

Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones. Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin – even that altar and high place he demolished.

He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also. Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things.

The king asked, "What is that tombstone I see?" The men of the city said, "It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very things you have done to it." "Leave it alone," he said. "Don't let anyone disturb his bones . . . "

Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. Then he went back to Jerusalem. The king gave this order to all the people: "Celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant."

Not since the days of the judges who led Israel, nor throughout the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, had any such Passover been observed. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem. Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem.

This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the Lord. Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh [Josiah's grandfather] **had done to provoke him to anger. So the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be . . .'"** (2 Kings 23:1-28, insertions mine)

The Bible summarizes the 23 years that followed Josiah's death saying, **"Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power."** (2 Chronicles 36:14-20)

## ***Summary***

I am impressed with four thoughts from these Bible verses. First, God's patience with sin has a limit. God destroyed Israel and Judah when there was no further remedy for their rebellion.

Second, even the righteous deeds of a zealous king and the testimony of God's prophets could not change the decadent direction of the people.

Third, the people who actually experienced the terrors of this destruction did not understand why God sent the destruction. Last, the degree of sin in the world today has reached outrageous proportions; just like Israel and Judah (and in Noah's day), so it is right now.

The parallel is clear. God's patience with sin has reached its limit. As it was in the days of . . . so it is right now!