

The Influence of Wicked and Righteous Leaders

Lesson 27

[1 Kings 12–14](#); [2 Chronicles 17](#); [2 Chronicles 20](#)

Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lesson 27, pp 128–133.

Purpose: To encourage class members to develop good leadership qualities so they can influence others to live righteously.

Preparation: a. [1 Kings 12:1–20](#). Rehoboam succeeds his father, Solomon, as king over the twelve tribes of Israel. He rejects the counsel of wise men to serve his people, seeking instead to impose greater burdens on them ([1 Kings 12:1–15](#)). The kingdom is divided as ten tribes revolt ([1 Kings 12:16–19](#); the ten tribes retain the title kingdom of Israel, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain under Rehoboam's rule and are called the kingdom of Judah). The kingdom of Israel selects Jeroboam, a former administrator in Solomon's kingdom, as king ([1 Kings 12:20](#)).

b. [1 Kings 12:25–33](#); [1 Kings 13:33–34](#); [1 Kings 14:14–16](#), [1 Kings 14:21–24](#). Jeroboam leads his people into idolatry and replaces the priests with men who are not Levites ([1 Kings 12:25–33](#); [1 Kings 13:33–34](#); for an explanation of groves and high places, see the [second additional teaching idea](#)). A prophet foretells the destruction of Jeroboam's family and the scattering of Israel ([1 Kings 14:14–16](#)). Rehoboam leads the kingdom of Judah into idolatry ([1 Kings 14:21–24](#)).

c. [2 Chronicles 17:1–10](#); [2 Chronicles 20:1–30](#). Jehoshaphat, Rehoboam's great-grandson, reigns righteously in the kingdom of Judah, destroying the groves and high places and sending Levites throughout Judah to teach from the book of the law of the Lord ([2 Chronicles 17:1–10](#)). As Judah's enemies come against them, Jehoshaphat and his people fast and pray. The Lord tells them the battle is not theirs, but his. Their attackers war among themselves and destroy each other ([2 Chronicles 20:1–30](#)).

Additional reading: [1 Kings 11:26–40](#); [2 Kings 17:20–23](#).

Attention Activity:

Take an old piece of clothing or a piece of paper that is cut in the shape of a piece of clothing and tear it into 12 pieces. Explain that toward the end of Solomon's life, the prophet Ahijah prophesied that Jeroboam, one of Solomon's 12 superintendents over taxes and labor, would take over much of the Israelite nation. To illustrate this, Ahijah seized the garment from the back of Jeroboam, tore it into 12 pieces, and gave 10 of the pieces to Jeroboam ([1 Kings 11:29–32](#); footnote 32a points out that according to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, two tribes, not one, would be left in the kingdom ruled by the descendants of David).

The Savior taught that “every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation” ([Matthew 12:25](#)). Explain that this is what happened to the kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death. This lesson is about the influence of wicked and righteous leaders on the divided kingdom of Israel.

1. The kingdom of Israel is divided, primarily because of Rehoboam's harsh leadership.

Teach and discuss [1 Kings 12:1–20](#).

You may want to write the following statement on the chalkboard:

A good leader:

1. Gives service.

- After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king of Israel. What changes did the Israelites want Rehoboam to make from the way his father ruled? (See [1 Kings 12:3–4](#).) What counsel did the older men give Rehoboam about ruling successfully? (See [1 Kings 12:6–7](#); [2 Chronicles 10:7](#).) Why are we more likely to be influenced positively by a leader who is kind and who serves us? How can we apply this counsel at home? at church? at school? at work? (See [D&C 121:41–46](#).) What are some examples you have seen of parents or other leaders applying this counsel successfully?

- After refusing the counsel of older men, Rehoboam turned to young men he had known in his youth. What was their advice? (See [1 Kings 12:8–11](#).) What were the results of Rehoboam's decision to follow their advice? (See [1 Kings 12:12–17](#). Explain that the phrase “Israel departed to their tents” refers to the ten tribes separating themselves from Rehoboam's kingdom.) How might these results have

been different if Rehoboam had followed the counsel of the older men? (See [1 Kings 12:7](#).)

- Jeroboam had been one of Solomon’s 12 superintendents over taxes and labor. Toward the end of Solomon’s reign, the prophet Ahijah had prophesied that Jeroboam would become king over many of the tribes of Israel ([1 Kings 11:29–31](#); see the [attention activity](#)). How was this prophecy fulfilled? (See [1 Kings 12:20](#), including footnote 20*b*. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin stayed with Rehoboam in the Southern Kingdom, or kingdom of Judah. The other ten tribes followed Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom, or kingdom of Israel.)

2. Jeroboam and Rehoboam lead their kingdoms into idolatry.

Teach and discuss [1 Kings 12:25–33](#); [1 Kings 13:33–34](#); [1 Kings 14:14–16](#), [1 Kings 14:21–24](#).

You may want to add to the statement you have written on the chalkboard:

A good leader:

1. Gives service.
2. Trusts and obeys the Lord.

- Through the prophet Ahijah, the Lord promised Jeroboam that he would be given a “sure house” (a secure kingdom) if he would walk in the Lord’s ways ([1 Kings 11:38](#)). How did Jeroboam forfeit the blessings of that promise? (See [1 Kings 12:25–33](#).) Why did Jeroboam build the golden calves and high places and ordain false priests? (See [1 Kings 12:26–33](#); [1 Kings 13:33–34](#).)

Explain that Jeroboam was afraid that if his people went to Jerusalem to worship, they might go back to Rehoboam. In an effort to control his people and retain their loyalty, he made golden calves in Bethel and Dan, two cities in the Northern Kingdom, and invited his people to worship in those cities. In doing this, he allowed his fear of defeat to override his trust in the Lord’s promises. Point out that a wise leader trusts the Lord and does not base decisions on fear or personal judgment.

- When his son became sick, Jeroboam sought the help of the prophet Ahijah. What did Ahijah prophesy concerning Jeroboam’s house (family) and kingdom? (See [1 Kings 14:14–16](#). The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in [2 Kings 17:20–23](#).)
- Like Jeroboam, Rehoboam also disobeyed God by leading people into idolatry

([1 Kings 14:21–24](#)). The wicked leadership of these two kings had long-lasting results. Both kingdoms were scattered or carried away captive many years later (Israel by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians) because they continued in their wicked traditions. How can one wicked leader have such a profound effect on so many people?

You may want to point out that we need not mirror the acts of wicked leaders as the people of Israel and Judah did. God has given us agency, and we can use that power to choose good, even if leaders choose evil ([Helaman 14:30–31](#)).

3. Jehoshaphat leads the kingdom of Judah to follow the Lord and His prophets.

Teach and discuss [2 Chronicles 17:1–10](#); [2 Chronicles 20:1–30](#).

You may want to add again to the list on the chalkboard:

A good leader:

1. Gives service.
2. Trusts and obeys the Lord.
3. Has faith in God.
4. Teaches from the scriptures.
5. Follows the prophets.

- Three generations after Rehoboam, his great-grandson Jehoshaphat reigned over the kingdom of Judah. How did Jehoshaphat demonstrate his personal righteousness? (See [2 Chronicles 17:3–4](#), [2 Chronicles 17:6](#).) How does our private devotion affect our ability to lead others?

- Jehoshaphat “took away the high places and groves out of Judah” ([2 Chronicles 17:6](#)). What do you think the people learned from this? (See [2 Chronicles 20:12–13](#), noting that “all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.”) What might we remove from our homes and our personal lives so we can worship God with greater devotion?

- Jehoshaphat sent Levites throughout the kingdom to teach the people from “the book of the law of the Lord” ([2 Chronicles 17:9](#)). How do you think being taught from the scriptures affected the people of Judah? How has personal and family

scripture study helped you? How does scripture study in the home influence our families and the Church as a whole?

President Ezra Taft Benson taught: *“Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow”* (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], 44).

• **2 Chronicles 20** tells of a period of terrible anxiety for the people of Judah, as three nations had declared war on them. The outcome seemed bleak for King Jehoshaphat and his people, who were greatly outnumbered. What did Jehoshaphat do to receive help? (See **2 Chronicles 20:3–13**.) What was the Lord’s answer to this supplication? (See **2 Chronicles 20:14–17**. Note that this answer came through the prophet Jahaziel.) What counsel did Jehoshaphat give his people? (See **2 Chronicles 20:20**.) As Latter-day Saints, how are we outnumbered today as were the people of Judah anciently? How does Jehoshaphat’s counsel apply to us?

• Remembering the prophet Jahaziel’s assurance that the battle was God’s, Jehoshaphat appointed singers to praise the Lord rather than fight. When they began to sing, the Lord protected them by causing their attackers to war among themselves and destroy one another (**2 Chronicles 20:21–24**). How are we protected when we remember and obey the words of the living prophet?

• In contrast to Jeroboam and Rehoboam, who led their people into idolatry, Jehoshaphat influenced the people of Judah to humble themselves before the Lord (**2 Chronicles 20:3–4**). What examples have you seen of the influence of righteous leaders? What can we do to help those we serve live righteously?

Conclusion: Testify of the power that leaders have to guide people to wickedness or righteousness. Remind class members of our responsibility to lead in our Church callings, in our communities, at work, and at home. Encourage class members to be good leaders by giving service, trusting and obeying the Lord, having faith in him, teaching from the scriptures, and following the prophets.

Additional Teaching Ideas:

1. Overcoming negative peer pressure

• The kingdom of Israel was divided largely because Rehoboam chose to follow the unwise counsel of his peers (**1 Kings 12:9–16**). How can we resist the temptation to follow unwise advice from our friends?

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen said:

“Many of you ... will be, at some time or another, approached by one or more of your ‘friends’ who will entice you to do something you know you should not do. ...

“ ‘No one will ever know,’ the so-called friends will tell you. ‘Besides, what difference will it make?’ ”

“... You don’t have to reject your friends who are on the wrong path; you don’t even have to give them up necessarily. You can be their caring friend, ready to help them when they are ready to be helped. You can talk to them and lift them and bear your testimony to them. Lead them by example.

“But don’t ever be led into displeasing your Father in Heaven by your friends who might ask that as a condition of being your friend, you must choose between their way and the Lord’s way.

“If that happens, choose the Lord’s way and look for new friends” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 45).

2. Meaning of *high places* and *groves*

The following definitions will help you explain the false worship instigated by Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

High places (**1 Kings 12:31**): altars that were built on hilltops. When the people fell into idolatry, they desecrated these altars and used them for idol worship.

Groves (**1 Kings 14:15**): places of pagan worship where people sometimes engaged in immoral behavior.

3. “And ... ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands” ([Deuteronomy 4:28](#))

• When Jeroboam set up the golden calves and the people worshiped on the high places and in the groves, he and his people were ignoring the warnings of Moses given 500 years earlier ([Deuteronomy 4:25–28](#)). What calamity were they setting themselves up for? What was promised if they would turn to the Lord instead of false idols? (See [Deuteronomy 4:29–31](#).)

4. Leadership object lesson

Bring to class two identical sets of blocks (or other objects). Invite two class members to participate in the following demonstration. Give each participant a set of blocks. Designate one class member to be the leader and the other to be the follower. Have the two class members turn their backs to each other so they cannot see each other’s blocks. Have the leader quickly build something with the blocks and give directions to the follower on how to build an identical structure. The follower should not ask questions as he or she follows the directions. Neither participant is to look at the other’s blocks until the project is complete.

When the follower is finished building, discuss how important it is for leaders to give clear instructions and for followers to listen carefully. If the follower has built a structure identical to the leader’s, praise both participants and ask other class members to comment on why they were successful. If the demonstration has resulted in differing structures, ask the following questions:

- Could the leader have stated the instructions more clearly? Could the follower have listened more carefully? How would it have helped to allow the follower to watch as the leader built the structure?
- How can we apply what we have learned from this demonstration in our Church callings and in our homes?

Old Testament Student Manual, 1 Kings-Malachi, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Chapter 4, pp 43-47.

A Kingdom Divided Against Itself

Chapter 4

(4-1) Introduction

The Lord has said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). A great lesson to be learned in life is to live in harmony with others. Where there is disharmony, unhappiness and tragedy result. On the other hand, where there is harmony, happiness and progress follow. Not only is this true in nations or kingdoms, but it is also true in personal and family relationships. Harmonious relationships can be developed and enhanced by understanding and applying insights from the scriptures.

NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 KINGS 12–16

(4-2) 1 Kings 12:1. Who Was Rehoboam?

Rehoboam was the son and successor of King Solomon (see 1 Kings 11:43). The Bible does not mention any other sons or daughters of Solomon. Since Rehoboam’s mother, Naamah, was an Ammonite (see 1 Kings 14:21), he was only half Israelite. But his mother’s ancestry was Semitic since the Ammonites were descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew.

(4-3) 1 Kings 12:1. Why Did Israel Gather at Shechem to Support Rehoboam Instead of Gathering at Jerusalem?

From the early years after the settlement of Israel in Canaan, there had been jealousy between the two most powerful tribes, Ephraim and Judah. Solomon’s son Rehoboam was the rightful successor to the throne, but northern Israel did not support him. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch explained why:

“Apart from the fact that the tribes had no right to choose at their pleasure a different king from the one who was the lawful heir to the throne of David, the very circumstance that the tribes who were discontented with Solomon’s government did not come to *Excavated ruins at ancient Shechem* Jerusalem to do homage to

Rehoboam, but chose Shechem [Shechem] as the place of meeting, and had also sent for Jeroboam out of Egypt, showed clearly enough that it was their intention to sever themselves from the royal house of David. . . .

“Rehoboam went to Shechem, because all Israel had come thither to make him king. ‘All Israel,’ according to what follows [compare 1 Kings 12:20–21], was the ten tribes beside Judah and Benjamin. The right of making king the prince whom God has chosen, *i.e.* of anointing him and doing homage to him . . . , was an old traditional right in Israel, and the tribes had exercised it not only in the case of Saul and David [see 1 Samuel 11:15; 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3], but in that of Solomon also [see 1 Chronicles 29:22]. The ten tribes of Israel made use of this right on Rehoboam’s ascent of the throne; but instead of coming to Jerusalem, the residence of the king and capital of the kingdom, as they ought to have done, and doing homage there to the legitimate successor of Solomon, they had gone to Shechem, the present Nablus [see Genesis 12:6; 33:18], the place where the ancient national gatherings were held in the tribe of Ephraim [see Joshua 24:1]. . . . On the choice of Shechem as the place for doing homage Kimchi has quite correctly observed, that ‘they sought an opportunity for transferring the government to Jeroboam, and therefore were unwilling to come to Jerusalem, but came to Shechem, which belonged to Ephraim, whilst Jeroboam was an Ephraimite.’ If there could be any further doubt on the matter, it would be removed by the fact that they had sent for Jeroboam the son of Nebat to come from Egypt, whither he had fled from Solomon [see 1 Kings 11:40], and attend this meeting, and that Jeroboam took the lead in the meeting, and no doubt suggested to those assembled the demand which they should lay before Rehoboam.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:1:191–93.)

This national meeting in which Rehoboam sought a vote of confidence was an important event. Life in Israel was never to be the same thereafter.

(4-4) 1 Kings 12:2–3. Who was Jeroboam and What Important Part Did He Play in the Division of Israel?

Jeroboam was the son of Nebat (see 1 Kings 12:15), an Ephraimite. He was one of Solomon’s twelve superintendents and had jurisdiction over all the taxes and labors exacted from the house of Joseph (see 1 Kings 11:28). The prophet Ahijah had prophesied that Jeroboam would someday take over much of the Israelite nation. To illustrate his prophecy, Ahijah tore a cloak in twelve pieces, gave ten to Jeroboam, and said: “Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (but he shall have one tribe for my servant David’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)” (1 Kings 11:31–32.) Thus, he prophetically outlined events which would soon transpire.

(4-5) 1 Kings 12:4. Why Did Israel Want to Lighten the Yoke Imposed by Solomon?

All of Samuel’s prophecies about Israel’s having a king were fulfilled in Solomon’s reign. Israel desired relief from the burdens of Solomon’s extravagance, which had brought upon them exorbitant taxes and conscript labor. The yoke mentioned here was symbolic of that burden.

One scholar noted that “Solomon’s kingdom barely outlived him. At his death his son and heir, Rehoboam, sought to ascend the throne of Israel and Judah. There was no difficulty in the south. The elders of Judah were no doubt pleased to anoint another native son to continue the rule which had favored Judah in so many ways. In the north, in Israel, it was a different story altogether. Before there was to be an acclamation of any son of Solomon, there must be some plain talk about certain policies of state which the men of the northern hills and valleys thought discriminatory if not unbearable. Forced labor gangs for royal building projects simply must not continue. Heavy and inequitable taxation favoring Judah would have to be modified. The new king would either have to find other ways to carry out his personal and imperial ambitions or else temper his desires. In any case, the northern tribes were clearly unwilling to bear the brunt of the monarchical burden. Underlying these real grievances was the reviving strength of the tribal elders. Solomon had not completely destroyed their power after all.” (Harry Thomas Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 99.)

(4-6) 1 Kings 12:4–14. Is It Folly to Reject the Counsel of the Aged?

The episode recorded in these verses demonstrates the value of age when wise counsel is needed. Because of their experience, older people are generally wiser than younger people. But because of their great energy and ability to adapt, youth can be very effective leaders. It is often best to allow the wisdom of the aged to guide the energy of youth. (Concerning the wisdom of the counsel given to Rehoboam by the old men, compare 1 Kings 12:7; Matthew 20:25–28; 23:11–12; Mosiah 2:9–18.)

The reference to scorpions (see 1 Kings 12:14) seems to be an allusion to scourges or whips made of several thongs of leather which had metal barbs embedded in the ends (see William Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “scorpion”). Rehoboam was simply announcing that he would deal even more sternly with the tribes of Israel than Solomon had.

(4-7) 1 Kings 12:16. What Does the Phrase “What Portion Have We in David? . . . See to Thine Own House, David” Mean?

Those assembled made it clear that they no longer considered themselves to be part

of the house of David (Judah). They rebelled against the dominion of Rehoboam and moved to establish their own kingdom. “To your tents” is an idiom meaning “Let’s go home!” (D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 337; see also 1 Kings 12:19; 2 Samuel 20:1–2; 2 Chronicles 10:16). The northern tribes withdrew their allegiance from Rehoboam and the house of David and said in essence, “David, you take care of your own house. We will no longer be associated nor have an inheritance with you” (see Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 2:436).

(4-8) 1 Kings 12:18. What Was the Significance of the Stoning of Adoram?

Rehoboam must not have thought the people were serious about their rebellion, for he sent Adoram to them. Since Adoram “was the person who was superintendent over the *tribute*, he was probably sent to collect the ordinary taxes; but the people, indignant at the *master* who had given them such a brutish answer [to their request for relief from burdens], stoned the *servant* to death. The sending of Adoram to collect the taxes, when the public mind was in such a state of fermentation [particularly after they had disavowed any allegiance to Rehoboam], was another proof of Rehoboam’s folly and incapacity to govern.” (Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:436.)

(4-9) 1 Kings 12:17. Who Were the “Children of Israel Which Dwelt in the Cities of Judah”?

“These ‘sons of Israel’ are members of the ten tribes who had settled in Judah in the course of ages [compare 1 Kings 12:23]; and the Simeonites especially are included, since they were obliged to remain in the kingdom of Judah from the very situation of their tribe-territory, and might very well be reckoned among the Israelites who dwelt in the cities of Judah, inasmuch as at first the whole of their territory was allotted to the tribe of Judah, from which they afterwards received a portion [see Joshua 19:1].” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:196.)

First Kings 12:17 has particular interest for students of the Book of Mormon. This passage helps to explain why such men as Lehi and Nephi, who were descendants of Manasseh (see Alma 10:3), and the family of Ishmael, who were descendants of Ephraim (see 1 Nephi 7:2; Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:184), were living in the land of Jerusalem several generations after Rehoboam. Laban, a record-keeper for the tribe of Joseph, also lived in Jerusalem at the time of Lehi and Ishmael (see 1 Nephi 3:2–4). This matter is explained more fully in 2 Chronicles 11:13–17 and 15:9 than in 1 Kings.

(4-10) 1 Kings 12:20. Was the Tribe of Judah Left by Itself?

The statement “there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only” is true only in very general terms. The members of the tribe of Benjamin, long associated with the tribe of Judah, and the Levites already living in and near Jerusalem and serving in the temple must also be included with Judah (see 1 Kings 12:21). Also, once Jeroboam established idolatry, many Levites and no doubt righteous individuals from all of the northern tribes migrated to the kingdom of Judah.

(4-11) 1 Kings 12:22–24

Although the people of Judah were not a righteous people (see 1 Kings 11:33), they were willing, in this case, to listen to the counsel of the Lord’s prophet (see also 2 Chronicles 11:1–12).

(4-12) 1 Kings 12:25–32. Why Did Jeroboam Lead His People into Idolatry?

With the kingdom divided, the ten tribes could not conveniently worship in the temple at Jerusalem because Judah controlled the city. Jeroboam, concerned with keeping Israel under his control, devised a new scheme for worship that would cause his people to worship away from Jerusalem. He built two golden calves in northern cities and invited his people to worship them. Adam Clarke said that Jeroboam “invented a political religion, instituted feasts in his own times different from those appointed by the Lord, gave the people certain objects of devotion, and pretended to think it would be both inconvenient and oppressive to them to have to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was not the last time that religion was made a state engine to serve political purposes.” (*Commentary*, 2:437.)

Even though he made golden calves, “that Jeroboam had in his mind not merely the Egyptian *Apis*-worship generally, but more especially the image-worship which Aaron introduced for the people at Sinai, is evident from the words borrowed from [Exodus 32:4], with which he studiously endeavoured to recommend his new form of worship to the people: ‘Behold, this is thy God, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ . . . What Jeroboam meant to say . . . was, ‘this is no new religion, but this was the form of worship which our fathers used in the desert, with Aaron himself leading the way.’ . . . And whilst the verbal allusion to that event at Sinai plainly shows that . . . Jehovah was worshipped under the image of the calves or young oxen; the choice of the places in which the golden calves were set up also shows that Jeroboam desired to adhere as closely as possible to ancient traditions. He did not select his own place of residence, but Bethel and Dan. *Bethel*, on the southern border of his kingdom, which properly belonged to the tribe of Benjamin [see Joshua 18:13, 22], the present *Beitin*, had already been consecrated as a divine seat by the vision of Jehovah which the patriarch Jacob received there in a dream [see Genesis 28:11, 19], and Jacob gave it the name of *Bethel*, house of God, and

afterwards built an altar there to the Lord [see Genesis 35:7]. . . . *Dan*, in the northern part of the kingdom, . . . was also consecrated as a place of worship by the image-worship established there by the Danites, at which even a grandson of Moses had officiated; and regard may also have been had to the convenience of the people, namely, that the tribes living in the north would not have to go a long distance to perform their worship.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:198–99.)

In ordaining a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, Jeroboam subverted the great feast of Tabernacles (which was held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month). He held a similar feast but at the same time undermined the ordinance. (See Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:437–38.)

Jeroboam cast off the Levite priests (see 2 Chronicles 11:14; 13:19) and ordained “priests of the lowest of the people” (1 Kings 12:31), allowing any to be appointed if they would just consecrate themselves by offering “a young bullock and seven rams” (2 Chronicles 13:9). He also assumed priestly functions himself (see 1 Kings 12:33). His rejection of the Levites resulted in their evacuation from his kingdom and uniting themselves with the kingdom of Rehoboam in Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 11:13–16).

(4-13) 1 Kings 13:3, 5. What Was the Significance of Pouring the Ashes Out?

“The pouring out of the sacrificial ashes in consequence of the breaking up of the altar was a penal sign, which indicated, along with the destruction of the altar, the desecration of the sacrificial service performed upon it” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:204). The fulfillment of 1 Kings 13:1–10 is recorded in 2 Kings 23:15–20.

(4-14) 1 Kings 13:11–34. Do Prophets Ever Lie or Disobey the Lord?

True prophets obey the word of God; false prophets do not. In this story are two prophets, one pictured as lying and the other pictured as disobeying God’s instructions. Ellis T. Rasmussen wrote: “There are some problems in this story of the man of God who came from Judah to warn the king of northern Israel and lost his life in the mission. Some help is available in the [Joseph Smith Translation] of verse 18, which indicates that the old prophet said, ‘Bring him back . . . *that I may prove him*; and he *lied not* unto him.’ Also there is a change in verse 26, in which the last part reads: ‘. . . therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto me.’ These make the account more understandable and more acceptable. The young prophet should have obeyed God.” (*An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings*, 2:4; emphasis added.)

(4-15) 1 Kings 13:22. “Thy Carcase Shall Not Come unto the Sepulchre of Thy Fathers”

This passage means that the “man of God that came from Judah” (1 Kings 13:21) would meet an untimely death and not be buried in his homeland. The ancient Hebrews believed it a great tragedy not to be buried properly.

(4-16) 1 Kings 14:1–3. Why Did Jeroboam Send His Wife to the Prophet Ahijah Instead of Going Himself?

Perhaps Jeroboam felt that the prophet of the Lord would listen or yield more to a mother’s enticings than to a father’s. Certainly he knew that he was not worthy to ask for any blessings from the Lord. This incident teaches the great lesson that one should live so that in a crisis he can call upon the Lord with confidence and faith. Jeroboam could not do so, and so he sent his wife instead. He also caused her to be disguised so that she might not be recognized as his wife. He had her take a gift to the prophet, as was considered proper in such instances, but the gift was the kind that a common citizen’s wife would take, thus adding to the deception.

(4-17) 1 Kings 14:4. What Does It Mean That Ahijah “Could Not See; for His Eyes Were Set”?

Ahijah was blind, or at least his eyes had become so weak with his old age that he could hardly see. The phrase “his eyes were set” indicates that he could not properly focus and follow images.

(4-18) 1 Kings 14:5–6. Those Who Have the Spirit of Revelation Cannot Be Deceived

This fallen world is rampant with deception and dishonesty. Though men often deceive one another, the Lord’s anointed can draw upon the gift of revelation and thereby see into the hearts of others or have things made known to them which cannot be obtained through the natural senses (see Jacob 2:5; Job 42:1; 1 Kings 8:39; Hebrews 4:12–13; D&C 6:16; 33:1).

(4-19) 1 Kings 14:8. Why Was David Referred to As an Example of Righteousness When He Had Committed Very Serious Sins?

There is an error in this verse. In the Joseph Smith Translation the verse reads as follows: “And rent the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it thee, because he kept not my commandments. But thou hast not been as my servant David, *when he followed me with all his heart only to do right in mine eyes.*”

(Emphasis added; see also JST, 1 Kings 11:33, 38; 15:3, 5, 11.)

(4-20) 1 Kings 14:9. “Hast Cast Me Behind Thy Back”

“The expression, to cast God behind the back, which only occurs here and in [Ezekiel 23:35], denotes the most scornful contempt of God, the strict opposite of ‘keeping God before the eyes and in the heart’” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 3:1:210–11).

(4-21) 1 Kings 14:10. Isn’t This Phrase Inappropriate for the Bible? Why Was It Used, and What Does It Mean?

Though this phrase is offensive to modern readers, it was not so when the King James Version was translated, nor was it in ancient times. The Hebrew idiom originally meant “every male.” The phrase “is only met within passages which speak of the destruction of a family or household to the very last man [see also 1 Kings 14:10; 16:11; 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8]” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:242). The same idea occurs in modern revelation without the offensive expression in Doctrine and Covenants 121:15.

(4-22) 1 Kings 14:10–13. Ahijah’s Prophecy about Jeroboam’s Posterity

The prophet indicated that all of Jeroboam’s posterity would be slain and none would receive a proper burial except his son “because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord” (1 Kings 14:13). Among the Hebrews, to be unburied is the worst thing that can happen to a dead person (see Philip Birnbaum, *A Book of Jewish Concepts*, p. 531; Notes and Commentary on 1 Kings 13:22).

(4-23) 1 Kings 14:15. What Did the Lord Mean When He Said He Would “Root Up Israel out of This Good Land . . . and Shall Scatter Them beyond the River”?

This passage refers to the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel: “After many minor losses in war the kingdom of Israel met an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, in or about the year 721 B.C. We read that Shalmanezar IV, king of Assyria, besieged Samaria, the third and last capital of the kingdom, and that after three years the city was taken by Sargon, Shalmanezar’s successor. The people of Israel were carried captive into Assyria and distributed among the cities of the Medes. Thus was the dread prediction of Ahijah to the wife of Jeroboam fulfilled. Israel was scattered beyond the river, probably the Euphrates, and from the time of this event the Ten Tribes are lost to history.” (James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 322–23.)

(4-24) 1 Kings 14:19. The Other Account of Jeroboam’s Acts

Second Chronicles 13:1–20 records some of the “rest of the acts of Jeroboam.”

Reference is made in 1 Kings 14:19 and other places to “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (or Judah; see 1 Kings 14:29). These references are not to the present books of Chronicles but to official records kept by the kings, which were used as source books by the author or authors of the present books of Kings. These records are lost to us.

(4-25) 1 Kings 14:22–24. What Were the Abominable Practices of Judah?

After the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan, they began to adopt many of the practices and religious rites of the corrupt heathen nations that surrounded them. For example, they followed many of the aspects of Baalism. The sun god Baal, the supreme god of the Phoenicians, was a fertility god. Those who worshiped Baal felt that such worship would ensure the generative and reproductive power of the soil and their animals as well as themselves. Settled in Canaan, Israel became a more sedentary, agricultural people, whereas before they had been more nomadic. Their dependence upon the productivity of the soil enticed them to turn to the worship of Baal. In such worship, with its emphasis on fertility, such practices as ritual prostitution of both sexes became rampant. Those who engaged in such practices were referred to by the Lord as *sodomites*. Other terms, such as *high places*, *images* (idols), *groves*, *high hills*, *green trees*, were all associated with the false and reprehensible forms of worship that often led Israel far from the Lord and that Judah, too, practiced under Rehoboam and at other times: “Among early nations it was the custom to erect altars on hilltops (Gen. 12:7–8; 22:2–4; 31:54). After the settlement in Canaan heathen altars were found set up on various hills and were ordered to be destroyed (Num. 33:52; Deut. 12:2–3). Altars to Jehovah were built at several high places (Judg. 6:25–26; 1 Sam. 9:12–25; 10:5, 13; 1 Chr. 21:26; 1 Kgs. 3:2–4; 18:30). Such altars became local centers of the worship of Jehovah. When idolatry came in, many of these altars were desecrated and used for heathen worship.” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “high places.”)

Concerning the sanctuaries wherein worship of Baal took place, one author explained: “Each place has its own Baal, who is worshipped at the local sanctuary. The sanctuary is at an elevated spot outside the town or village, either on a natural eminence or on a mound artificially made for the purpose; these are the ‘high places’ of the Old Testament; originally Canaanite places of worship, they drew to themselves also the worship of Israel. The apparatus of worship at these shrines is of a very simple nature. An upright stone represents the god. . . . He was supposed to come to the stone when meeting with his worshippers; and in the earliest times of Semitic religion this stone served the purpose of an altar: the gifts, which were not originally burned, were laid upon it, or the blood of the victim was applied to it. But besides the altar and the upright stone of *massebah* the Canaanite shrine had another piece of furniture. A massive tree-trunk, fixed in the ground and with some of its branches perhaps still remaining, represented the female deity who is the invariable companion of the Baal. This is the Asherah of Canaan, a word which in

the Authorized Version is translated ‘grove,’ after an error of the Vulgate, but which in the Revised Version is rightly left untranslated. [Judges 3:7; 6:25, 2 Kings 23:6.] The word Ashera is in such passages the designation of the tree which stood to represent the goddess.” (Allan Menzies, *History of Religion*, 172; see also *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* [religion 301, 2003], pp. 245–48, 255.)

(4-26) 1 Kings 14:22. What Does the Scripture Mean When It Says God Was Jealous? Why Was He Jealous?

The word *jealousy* used here means much the same as it did in Exodus 20:5. The Hebrew root *kanah* denotes “ardour, zeal, jealousy” (William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 888). The implication is that the Lord possesses sensitive and deep feelings about false and degrading forms of worship (see Exodus 20:5*b*). The reason seems clear: the only power to save mankind from sin lies with God. Any false worship, therefore, cuts the sinner off from that power. Since God loves His children and wishes only their best eternal welfare, He is jealous (that is, feels very strongly) about any vain or false worship they perform. The Lord was jealous of the sins of Judah because by these sins they, like Israel, were being turned from Him to a course that would deprive them of the salvation that only He could offer.

(4-27) 1 Kings 14:25. Who Was Shishak?

The king of Egypt referred to here as Shishak was most probably the “Libyan prince who founded Egypt’s XXIInd Dynasty as the Pharaoh Sheshong I. He reigned for 21 years c. 945–924 B.C. He harboured Jeroboam as a fugitive from Solomon, after Ahijah’s prophecy of Jeroboam’s future kingship [see 1 Kings 11:29–40]. Late in his reign, Shishak invaded Palestine in the fifth year of Rehoboam, 925 B.C. He subdued Judah, taking the treasures of Jerusalem as tribute [see 1 Kings 14:25–26; 2 Chronicles 12:2–12], and also asserted his dominion over Israel, as is evidenced by a broken stele of his from Megiddo. At the temple of Amun in Thebes, Shishak left a triumphal relief-scene, naming many Palestinian towns.” (J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Shishak”; see also 2 Chronicles 12:5–12 for a detailed account of Shishak’s invasion.)

(4-28) 1 Kings 14:31. “Rehoboam Slept with His Fathers”

The phrase “slept with his fathers” is a euphemism that means that someone has died and his spirit has passed on to join the other departed spirits. The phrase is also used to indicate burial in the family tomb. (See Guthrie and Motyer, *Commentary*, p. 326).

The Time of the Divided Kingdom

Edward J. Brandt, Ensign, Apr. 1974, 30

After the death of Solomon, a power struggle for the leadership of Israel ensued. Under the direction of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, the tribe of Judah together with the assimilated Simeonites of that region and half of the tribe of Benjamin joined together to form the southern monarchy called the kingdom of Judah.

The ten and one-half tribes in the north united under the leadership of a strong military officer, Jeroboam, to establish the northern kingdom called Israel or sometimes Ephraim, after the preeminent tribe.

The record of the era of the divided kingdoms is a difficult seesaw account. Time lapses in the narrative and only selected mention of events is characteristic of the interwoven chronicle of these kingdoms. The chart below shows the general chronological relationship of the kings of each of the kingdoms with a brief notation concerning the known prophets who ministered unto them. (* Known prophets are listed under each king.)

Kings of Judah		Kings of Israel
REHOBOAM ruled 17 years (1 Kgs. 14:21 ; 2 Chr. 12:13) *SHEMAIAH (1 Kgs. 12:22 ; 2 Chr. 12:15) *IDDO (2 Chr. 12:15)	–c. 931 B.C.–	JEROBOAM ruled 22 years (1 Kgs. 14:20) *AHIJAH (1 Kgs. 11:29 ; 1 Kgs. 12:15)
ABIJAM ruled 3 years (1 Kgs. 15:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 13:1–2)		
ASA ruled 41 years (1 Kgs. 15:9–10 ; 2 Chr. 16:13) *AZARIAH (2 Chr. 15:1–8) *HANANI (2 Chr. 16:7)		NADAB ruled 2 years (1 Kgs. 15:25)
		BAASHA ruled 24 years (1 Kgs. 15:28, 33) *JEHU (1 Kgs. 16:1, 7)
	18	ELAH ruled 2 years (1 Kgs. 16:8)

		ZIMRI ruled 7 days (1 Kgs. 16:10, 15)
		TIBNI ruled a part of Israel 6 years (1 Kgs. 16:21–22)
JEHOSHAPHAT ruled 25 years (1 Kgs. 22:42 ; 2 Chr. 20:31) [He began his rule 3 years before the death of his ill father, Asa, 2 Chr. 16:12 .] *JEHU (2 Chr. 19:2 ; 2 Chr. 20:34) *MICAIAH (1 Kgs. 22:8) *JAHAZIEL (2 Chr. 20:14) *ELIEZER (2 Chr. 20:37)		OMRI ruled a part of Israel 6 years, all of Israel 6 years (1 Kgs. 16:21–23)
		AHAB ruled 22 years (1 Kgs. 16:29) *ELIJAH (1 Kgs. 17–19 ; 2 Kgs. 1–2)
JEHORAM ruled 8 years (2 Kgs. 1:17 ; 2 Kgs. 8:16–17 ; 2 Chr. 21:5, 20)	–853 B.C.–	AHAZIAH ruled 2 years (1 Kgs. 22:51)
		J(EH)ORAM ruled 12 years (2 Kgs. 1:17 ; 2 Kgs. 3:1)
AHAZIAH ruled 1 year (2 Kgs. 8:25–26 ; 2 Kgs. 9:29 ; 2 Chr. 22:1–2)		
ATHALIAH (queen) ruled 7 years (2 Kgs. 11:1–4 ; 2 Chr. 22:2–3 ; 2 Chr. 10–12)		
J(EH)OASH ruled 40 years (2 Kgs. 11:2, 21 ; 2 Kgs. 12:1 ; 2 Chr. 24:1, 24–25) *ZECHARIAH (2 Chr. 24:19–20) *JOEL c.	–841 B.C.–	JEHU ruled 28 years (2 Kgs. 10:36) *ELISHA (2 Kgs. 2, 4–9)
		J(EH)OAHAZ ruled 17 years (2 Kgs. 13:1)

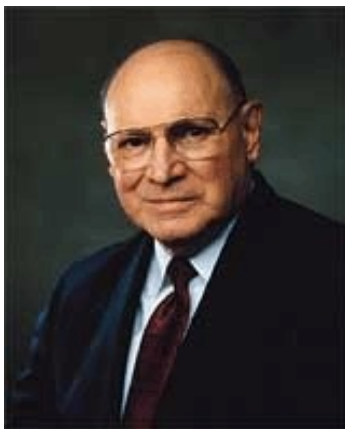
AMAZIAH ruled 29 years (2 Kgs. 14:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 25:1–2) [War caused Amaziah to enthrone his son Uzziah as a joint ruler (24 years) in case of his death. 2 Kgs. 14:17, 19–21, 23 ; 2 Kgs. 15:1 ; 2 Chr. 25:25]		
UZZIAH (Azariah) ruled 52 years (2 Kgs. 14:21 ; 2 Kgs. 15:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 26:1, 3) *ISAIAH (2 Chr. 26:22 ; Isa. 1:1 ; Isa. 6:1) *HOSEA (Hosea 1:1) [Jotham ruled jointly with his father for 10 years when Uzziah was ill, 2 Kgs. 15:5 .]		
		J(EH)OASH ruled 16 years (2 Kgs. 13:10) [Jeroboam ruled jointly with his father 12 years, 2 Kgs. 14:23 ; 2 Kgs. 15:1 .]
		JEROBOAM II ruled 41 years (2 Kgs. 14:23 ; 2 Kgs. 15:1) *JONAH (2 Kgs. 14:25) *HOSEA (Hosea 1:1) *AMOS (Amos 1:1)
JOTHAM ruled 16 years (2 Kgs. 15:32–33 ; 2 Chr. 27:1–8) *ISAIAH (Isa. 1:1) *HOSEA (Hosea 1:1) *MICAH (Micah 1:1) [Ahaz ruled jointly with Jotham 3 years, 2 Kgs. 16:1 .]		ZE(A)CHARIAH ruled 6 months (2 Kgs. 15:8)
		SHALLUM ruled 1 month (2 Kgs. 15:13)
		MENAHM ruled 10 years (2 Kgs. 15:17)
AHAZ ruled 16 years (2 Kgs. 16:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 28:1) *ISAIAH (Isa. 1:1 ; Isa. 7 ; Isa. 8:1–4) *HOSEA (Hosea 1:1) *MICAH (Micah 1:1) *OBADIAH c.		PEKAHIAH ruled 2 years (2 Kgs. 15:22–23)
		PEKAH ruled 20 years (2 Kgs. 15:25, 27)

HEZEKIAH ruled 29 years (2 Kgs. 16:20 ; 2 Kgs. 18:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 29:1) *ISAIAH (2 Kgs. 19:2, 20 ; 2 Kgs. 20:1, 6 ; 2 Chr. 32:20, 32 ; Isa. 1:1 ; Isa. 28:5) *HOSEA (Hosea 1:1) *MICAH (Micah 1:1) [Manasseh ruled jointly with his father, Hezekiah, 11 years, 2 Kgs. 21:1 .]		
		HOSHEA ruled 9 years (2 Kgs. 15:30 ; 2 Kgs. 17:1–6 ; 2 Kgs. 18:9–12)
MANASSEH ruled 55 years (2 Kgs. 20:21 ; 2 Kgs. 21:1 ; 2 Chr. 33:1) *NAHUM c. [Many prophets and seers labored with this wicked king, 2 Kgs. 21:10–16 ; 2 Chr. 33:18–19 .]	–722 B.C.–	[Israel (Samaria) falls and is carried captive to Assyria; later, they are known as the lost tribes of Israel, 3 Ne. 16:1–3 ; 3 Ne. 21:26 ; D&C 133:26–34 ; 2 Esdras 13:40–47, from the Apocrypha; A of F 1:10 .]
AMON ruled 2 years (2 Kgs. 21:18–19 ; 2 Chr. 33:21–25)		
JOSIAH ruled 31 years (2 Kgs. 21:24, 26 ; 2 Kgs. 22:1–2 ; 2 Chr. 34:1–2) *HULDAH (the prophetess) (2 Kgs. 22:14–20 ; 2 Chr. 34:22–28) *ZEPHANIAH (Zeph. 1:1) *JEREMIAH (Jer. 1:1–2)		
JEHOAHAZ ruled 3 months (2 Kgs. 23:30–31 ; 2 Chr. 36:1–2)		

JEHOIAKIM (Eliakim) ruled 11 years (2 Kgs. 23:34–37 ; 2 Chr. 26:4–5) *HABAKKUK c. *JEREMIAH (Jer. 1:3 ; Jer. 25:1 ; Jer. 26:1 ; Jer. 27:1 ; Jer. 35:1 ; Jer. 36:1, 9, 28–30 ; Jer. 46:2)		
JEHOIACHIN (Coniah or Jeconiah) ruled 3 months (2 Kgs. 24:5–6, 8 ; 2 Chr. 36:8–9 ; Jer. 37:1) [Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon with a large group of Judah. 2 Kgs. 24:10–16 ; 2 Kgs. 25:27–30 ; Jer. 24:1 ; Jer. 52:28, 31–34 ; Ezek. 1:1–3 ; Ezek. 40:1 .]		
ZEDEKIAH (Mattaniah) ruled 11 years (2 Kgs. 24:17–18 ; 2 Chr. 36:10–11) *LEHI (2 Chr. 36:15–16 ; 1 Ne. 1:4 ; 1 Ne. 5:13) *JEREMIAH (2 Chr. 36:12, 21 ; Jer. 1:3 ; Jer. 21:1 ; Jer. 28:1 ; Jer. 32:1 ; Jer. 34:4 ; Jer. 37:1)		
[Babylon destroys Jerusalem and Judah; Zedekiah was carried captive to Babylon with his people. 2 Chr. 36:11–13, 17–21 ; Jer. 39:7 .]	–587 B.C.–	

Journey to Higher Ground

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 16



We are faced with a choice. We can trust in our own strength, or we can journey to higher ground and come unto Christ.

On December 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia, creating a deadly tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people. It was a terrible tragedy. In one day, millions of lives were forever changed.

But there was one group of people who, although their village was destroyed, did not suffer a single casualty.

The reason?

They knew a tsunami was coming.

The Moken people live in villages on islands off the coast of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). A society of fishermen, their lives depend on the sea. For hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, their ancestors have studied the ocean, and they have passed their knowledge down from father to son.

One thing in particular they were careful to teach was what to do when the ocean receded. According to their traditions, when that happened, the “Laboon”—a wave that eats people—would arrive soon after.

When the elders of the village saw the dreaded signs, they shouted to everyone to run to high ground.

Not everyone listened.

One elderly fisherman said, “None of the kids believed me.” In fact, his own daughter called him a liar. But the old fisherman would not relent until all had left the village and climbed to higher ground. [1](#)

The Moken people were fortunate in that they had someone with conviction who warned them of what would follow. The villagers were fortunate because they listened. Had they not, they may have perished.

The prophet Nephi wrote about the great disaster of his day, the destruction of Jerusalem. “As one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity,” he said, “even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord.” [2](#)

Since the days of Adam, the Lord has spoken to His prophets, and while His message differs according to the specific needs of the time, there is one consistent, never-changing theme: Depart from iniquity and journey to higher ground.

As people heed the words of the prophets, the Lord blesses them. When they disregard His word, however, distress and suffering often follow. Over and over, the Book of Mormon teaches this great lesson. In its pages we read of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent who, because of their righteousness, were blessed of the Lord and became prosperous. Yet often this prosperity turned into a curse in that it caused them to “harden their hearts, and ... forget the Lord their God.” [3](#)

There is something about prosperity that brings out the worst in some people. In the book of Helaman, we learn of one group of Nephites who experienced great loss and slaughter. Of them we read, “And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, [and] denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation.” [4](#)

This sorrow would not have afflicted them “had it not been for their wickedness.” [5](#) If only they had heeded the words of the prophets of their day and journeyed to higher ground, their lives would have been dramatically different.

The natural consequence that comes to those who depart from the way of the Lord

is that they are left to their own strength. [6](#) While in the heat of our success we might assume that our own strength is sufficient, those who rely upon the arm of the flesh soon discover how weak and unreliable it truly is. [7](#)

For example, Solomon, at first, obeyed the Lord and honored His law. Because of this, he prospered and was blessed not only with wisdom but with wealth and honor. If he continued in righteousness, the Lord promised to “establish the throne of [his] kingdom upon Israel for ever.” [8](#)

But even after heavenly visitations, even after receiving blessings above all men, Solomon turned away from the Lord. Because of this, the Lord decreed that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant. [9](#)

The name of that servant was Jeroboam. Jeroboam was an industrious man from the tribe of Ephraim whom Solomon had promoted to manage a portion of his laborers. [10](#)

One day, as Jeroboam was traveling, a prophet approached and prophesied that the Lord would rend the kingdom from Solomon and give ten of the twelve tribes of Israel to Jeroboam.

Through His prophet, the Lord promised Jeroboam if he would do what is right, “I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.” [11](#)

The Lord chose Jeroboam and promised remarkable blessings to him if only he would obey the commandments and journey to higher ground. After Solomon’s death, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, and ten of the twelve tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam.

After receiving such favor, did the new king obey the Lord?

Unfortunately, he did not. He set up golden calves and encouraged his people to worship them. He created his own “priesthood” by selecting whomsoever he would, consecrating them to be “priests of the high places.” [12](#) In short, in spite of the great blessings he had received from the Lord, the king was evil above all those before him. [13](#) In later generations, Jeroboam was the standard by which evil kings of Israel were compared.

Because of such wickedness, the Lord turned away from Jeroboam. As a result of the king’s wickedness, the Lord decreed that the king and all of his family would be destroyed until not one was left. This prophecy was later fulfilled to the letter. The seed of Jeroboam perished from the earth. [14](#)

Solomon and Jeroboam are examples of a great, tragic cycle so often illustrated in

the Book of Mormon. When the people are righteous, the Lord prospers them. Prosperity often leads to pride, which leads to sin. Sin leads to wickedness and to hearts that become hardened to things of the Spirit. Eventually, the end of this road leads to heartbreak and sorrow.

This pattern is repeated not only in the lives of individual people but by cities, nations, and even the world. The consequences of ignoring the Lord and His prophets are certain and often accompanied by great sorrow and regret. In our day the Lord has warned that wickedness will ultimately lead to “famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven” until “the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God.” [15](#)

It is important to understand, however, that many fine and good people are affected by calamities of man and nature. The early Saints of this dispensation were persecuted and driven from their homes. Some lost their lives. But, perhaps because they had endured so much, they developed an inner strength that was a necessary preparation for the work they were yet to do.

The same happens in our day as well.

Because we are not immune to calamities, we must learn from them.

While the scriptures show the consequences of disobedience, they also show what can happen when people listen to the Lord and heed His counsel.

When the wicked city of Nineveh heard the warning voice of the prophet Jonah, they cried mightily to the Lord, repented, and were saved from destruction. [16](#)

Because the people in Enoch’s day were evil, the Lord commanded Enoch to open his mouth and warn the people to turn from their wickedness and serve the Lord their God.

Enoch set aside his fears and did as he was commanded. He traveled among the people, crying with a loud voice, testifying against their works. The scriptures tell us that “all men were offended because of him.” They spoke among themselves of “a strange thing in the land” and a “wild man” that had come among them. [17](#)

Although many hated Enoch, the humble believed his words. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground, and “they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.” [18](#) In their case, instead of prosperity leading to pride and sin, it led to compassion and righteousness. “And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.” [19](#)

After His Resurrection, the Savior came to the Americas. Because of His wondrous ministry, the people's hearts were softened. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground. They cherished His words and sought to follow His example.

They lived so righteously that there were no contentions among them, and they dealt justly one with another. They shared freely of their substance one with another, and they prospered exceedingly.

Of this people it was said that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God." [20](#)

In our day we face a similar choice. We can foolishly ignore the prophets of God, depend on our own strength, and ultimately reap the consequences. Or we can wisely draw near to the Lord and partake of His blessings.

King Benjamin described both paths and both consequences. He said that those who forsake the Lord will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment." [21](#)

But those who journey to higher ground and keep the commandments of God "are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness." [22](#)

How do we know which direction we are headed? When the Savior walked the earth He was asked to name the greatest commandment. Without hesitation He said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." [23](#)

In these verses, the Lord offers a clear way of knowing if we are on the right path. Those who journey to higher ground love the Lord with all their hearts. We see in their lives manifestations of that love. They seek their God in prayer and plead for His Holy Spirit. They humble themselves and open their hearts to the teachings of the prophets. They magnify their callings and seek to serve rather than be served. They stand as witnesses of God. They obey His commandments and grow strong in their testimony of the truth.

They also love Heavenly Father's children, and their lives manifest that love. They care for their brothers and sisters. They nurture, serve, and sustain their spouses and children. In the spirit of love and kindness, they build up those around them. They give freely of their substance to others. They mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort. [24](#)

This journey to higher ground is the pathway of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a journey that will ultimately lead us to exaltation with our families in the presence of the Father and the Son. Consequently, our journey to higher ground must include the house of the Lord. As we come unto Christ and journey to higher ground, we will desire to spend more time in His temples, because the temples represent higher ground, sacred ground.

In every age we are faced with a choice. We can trust in our own strength, or we can journey to higher ground and come unto Christ.

Each choice has a consequence.

Each consequence, a destination.

I bear witness that Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer, the living Son of the living God. The heavens are open, and a loving Heavenly Father reveals His word unto man. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the gospel was restored to earth. In our day a prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, lives and reveals the word of God to man. His voice sounds in harmony with those prophetic voices of all ages past.

"I invite every one of you," he has said, "wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength." [25](#)

Brothers and sisters, we are called to journey to higher ground.

We can avoid the sorrow and distress that comes as a consequence of disobedience.

We can partake of peace, joy, and eternal life if we will heed the words of the prophets, be sensitive to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and fill our hearts with love for our Heavenly Father and our fellowman.

I leave my witness that the Lord will bless all who embark upon the paths of discipleship and journey to higher ground, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Gospel topics: Holy Ghost, agency, obedience, prophets, service, temples

Notes:

1. “Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves,” CBS News, *60 Minutes* transcript, Mar. 20, 2005, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.

2. [2 Ne. 25:9](#).

3. [Hel. 12:2](#).

4. [Hel. 4:12](#).

5. [Hel. 4:11](#).

6. See [Hel. 4:13](#).

7. See [John 15:5](#): “Without me ye can do nothing.”

8. See [1 Kgs. 9:4–5](#).

9. See [1 Kgs. 11:9–10](#).

10. See [1 Kgs. 11:28](#).

11. [1 Kgs. 11:38](#).

12. See [1 Kgs. 12:28–30](#); [1 Kgs. 13:33](#).

13. See [1 Kgs. 14:9](#).

14. See [1 Kgs. 15:29](#).

15. [D&C 87:6](#).

16. See [Jonah 3:4–10](#).

17. See [Moses 6:37–38](#).

18. [Moses 7:17](#).

19. [Moses 7:18](#).

20. [4 Ne. 1:16](#).

21. [Mosiah 3:25](#).

22. [Mosiah 2:41](#).

23. [Matt. 22:37–40](#).

24. See [Mosiah 18:9](#).

25. “Stay the Course—Keep the Faith,” in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72.