

## He Did What?

This sermon is going to be a little different. I just felt in my spirit this was a word of warning the Lord had for us, to warn us about the danger and the consequences of compromise and accommodation to the culture around us. The call of God to repentance and salvation and discipleship is a call to obedience, a call to take up a cross and follow Jesus. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and theologian who died at the hands of the Nazis wrote, **“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” ...Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

We are called to a life of obedience to Christ and his word. When we choose to take a different path and reject his word, it leads to trouble and destruction. In spite of the warnings, too often we go right ahead and do as we please. Again and again in Scripture we see people called by God, chosen, anointed, blessed and given instruction from the Lord about the choices to make, then they go right ahead and ignore God’s instruction and turn away from the Lord. I find myself reading the story and asking, “He did what?” **(Photo of Dan).**

This is a picture I took a couple of weeks ago at a place called Dan, in the north of Israel. It is a beautiful place, a nature preserve. The water you see is part of the headwaters of the Jordan River. The Hasbani from Lebanon, the Dan and the Baniyas join to make up the Jordan River. This beautiful place is the scene of a horrible chapter in Israel’s history. Turn to 1 Kings 11. In order to tell the story, I need to start with the story of Solomon, then we are going to see if we can learn a few lessons for ourselves as we look at the story.

Saul is the first king, followed by David who unites the twelve tribes of Israel into one nation. David rules for 40 years and when he dies his son Solomon becomes king. 1 Kings 3 tells us God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for whatever he wanted. Solomon said, **“Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.” 1 Kings 3:9.** The Lord was pleased and promised if he would obey the Lord he would bless him beyond measure and grant him long life. There was no

king like Solomon, blessed with wealth, fame, wisdom and the ability to rule justly. He built a fabulous palace and an incredible temple where the glory of God dwelt. 1 Kings 8 tells about the dedication of the temple and how God promised to bless the people. 1 Kings 9 God appears to Solomon again and promises to continue to bless him but warns him if he allows compromise and begins to serve other gods and disobeys God's commands, he will cut off the people from the land. Solomon knew all of this, and in spite of being blessed with God's favor and blessing above everyone else on the planet, we find ourselves asking, **"He did what?"**

The bible says Solomon loved many foreign women. The Lord had told his people they must not intermarry with the nations around them because they will turn your heart after their gods. The bible says, **"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord."** 1 Kings 11:4-6  
(Read 1 Kings 11:7-13)

I don't want you to miss how dangerous this is. Both blessing and curse can be present in a person's life at the same time. We think it's one or the other but life doesn't seem to work that way. It's why we need to pay attention to our heart, our choices, our priorities. Solomon is blessed with wisdom, God's favor and yet at the same time his heart begins to turn away from God and toward evil. He's still king, still has wisdom, still enjoys the blessings of God, but underneath destruction and decay are eating away the foundation. His choices forfeit the blessing of God. Solomon is known as the wisest man who ever lived and yet the bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). The starting point of all wisdom, and the rewards and benefits of wisdom are lost if you stop fearing, honoring and obeying the Lord. Someone said "Solomon had wisdom yet lived as a fool."

The promise of God's blessings and blessing to his children is offered yet Solomon did what? He forfeited it all because of compromise. He married pagan women that God said not to marry, turned away from the Lord and turned to idolatry and disobedience. He said he had no adversary and no trouble in his kingdom, but when he sinned, trouble began. And that's where Jeroboam enters the picture in 1 Kings 11.

Jeroboam son of Nebat is one of Solomon's officials, an up and coming young guy. We don't know if he had aspirations beyond just working for the king, but one day, minding his own

business as he's leaving Jerusalem, a prophet named Ahijah comes alongside him. It's just the two of them when Ahijah takes the new cloak he's wearing and tears it into twelve pieces. He told Jeroboam, "take ten pieces of the cloak for yourself for this is what God says, He is going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hands and give you ten tribes. For the sake of David, Solomon's son who will rule in his place will have one tribe, Judah, and will have the city of Jerusalem, but you will have the rest. **"I will take you and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."** 1 Kings 11:37-38

Imagine, you are part of the King's staff and suddenly God tells you he is going to elevate you and make you king! He promises to make a dynasty out of you and your children. Incredible. What a promise! Solomon finds out what God told Jeroboam and tries to have him killed so he runs to Egypt and remains there until Solomon is dead. We don't have time to tell about Solomon's son Rehoboam who rejects the counsel of the elders and makes choices that cause the ten tribes of the north to break away from Rehoboam just as God had said. Now Rehoboam is king over Judah in the South and Jeroboam returns and is made king of the ten northern tribes of what is now called Israel (1 Kings 12:20). Rehoboam makes plans to march into battle to take the ten tribes back when a man of God tells him this is God's doing and don't fight against your brothers so everyone goes home with a loose treaty between Israel and Judah.

Jeroboam has this word from the Lord promising to bless him and build a dynasty for him and his heirs as enduring as the one he built for David. All he has to do is serve the Lord and do what's right, to obey the command and instruction of the Lord. Perfect! How hard can that be? And certainly he should be motivated to serve the Lord after all God has done for him, raising him up from obscurity to be king of Israel! But look at 1 Kings 12:26. **"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, and the other in Dan. 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, and offered sacrifices on the altar...” 1 Kings 12:26-32** He did what???

Jeroboam sees what happened to Solomon because he worshiped idols and stopped obeying God, the united kingdom is taken from him and ten tribes given to Jeroboam. He saw the judgement that came and in spite of that, he did what? One stupid, sinful thing after another!

There are three festivals that the Jewish people were supposed to go to Jerusalem, to the temple to celebrate – Passover, Sukkot (feast of Tabernacles) and Shavuot or Pentecost. Jeroboam thinks, if the people go to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God at these festivals and offer sacrifice to the Lord, they’ll start giving their allegiance to Rehoboam and I will lose the ten tribes and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam. I’ll give them a reason to stay in Israel rather than going to Jerusalem and to Judah. I’ll improve our religion. I’ll make it easier on everyone. A little religious innovation will solve the problem. So he ignores the commands of God and goes his own way!

He makes golden calves, a look back at the golden calf that Aaron made in the wilderness when the children of Israel first left Egypt. A bull was a symbol of fertility and prosperity and strength. The invisible God of the Israelites was a little hard to comprehend so, here is a golden calf, here is a physical image of this invisible God, worship him.

He gives them two options – Bethel and Dan, one in the south and one in the north. That way they didn’t have to travel all the way to Jerusalem. He appoints priests that aren’t of the tribe of Levi which is what God had commanded. The Levitical priests would have been loyal to David and the temple in Jerusalem so he appoints new priests. “This is how we used to do it in the old days, but we want to be more inclusive, more relaxed. We don’t have to follow all of God’s narrow rules about things.” Compromise and accommodation rather than obedience!

God said Sukkot, the feast of tabernacles was to be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month but Jeroboam chooses the eighth month. “It will make sure the harvest is all in. It will make it easier on the people.” The bible says “a month of his own choosing”. Not the month God chose, but the month Jeroboam chose. **(Show picture of the altar area at the excavation at Dan with a replica of the altar)**. He was making up the rules as he went along, determined to do it his way rather than God’s way.

In chapter 13 God sends a man of God to warn Jeroboam. He cries out against this altar and says a son will be born to the house of David and he will sacrifice the bodies of your priests on this altar. Judgement is coming and as a sign, the altar split apart and the ashes poured out. Jeroboam points at the prophet and tells the guards to seize him and as he does his hand and arm are paralyzed and he can't put it back down. Jeroboam begs the man of God to pray and ask God to heal his arm which he does and the Lord heals him! But he still won't repent.

He has a son, an heir named Abijah who actually was a good son. Jewish historians say he appealed to his father to let the people go to Jerusalem to worship and God says Abijah is the only one of Jeroboam's household in whom the Lord found anything good. However, Abijah gets sick. Jeroboam sends his wife in disguise to ask the prophet to pray for his son but the prophet tells her because of their sin, the son will die and the kingdom will be taken from Jeroboam and none of his descendants will survive. The bible says **“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways.” 1 Kings 13:33.** After all this, “He did what?”

Refusing to learn anything from Jeroboam and his sins, the people of Israel continued to follow after the ways of Jeroboam, in idolatry and sinning against the Lord and finally judgment comes and Israel is defeated and carried off into exile. We call them the ten lost tribes of Israel. It all happened because of compromise. Can we learn anything from Jeroboam?

**You can't keep by sin what God has given by grace.** Jeroboam was afraid of losing the kingdom God had given him so in order to keep it, he begins to sin. It leaves me asking “he did what?” Disobedience will cause you to forfeit the blessing and gifts of God! God gave you a job and you decide the way to keep it is to cheat and lie to keep it. He blesses you so in order to keep his blessings you stop going to church so you can work harder on Sunday, or you decide you need that one day to rest up. He blesses you financially so you decide you'll disobey God and keep all your money and not pay your tithes. Listen to me, you can't keep by sin what God has given you by His grace and mercy and favor. Obey God! Keep on obeying him!

**Don't worry about man's approval, God's approval is what matters!** Jeroboam feared losing the approval of the people if they went back to Jerusalem. “What if they like Rehoboam more than me?” Who cares? What matters is not the approval of men but the approval of the God who loves you, who called you to obedience. David wrote, **“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Psalm 118:6.** You don't need to fear men. Obey God. He is with you. He gave you the kingdom, he's blessed you, he'll take

care of it all. There is only one whose opinion and approval really matters. Honor God and serve him.

**Compromise rather than obedience to God's commands leads to destruction.** It was such a long way to Jerusalem. I know God said to go there to the temple for the festival but, it's hot and a long journey and up hill and Dan is beautiful and refreshing and nearby. We are tempted by comfort and convenience, aren't we? Jeroboam made worship comfortable and convenient. Don't get me wrong, I'm thankful for comfort and convenience. I'm glad I don't have to walk to get to church and I'm thankful for airconditioning and carpet on the floor and comfortable seats. But when we try to make the faith convenient and discipleship comfortable, when we take out the parts that don't sit well with us and with our culture, when we try to accommodate sin, we are simply taking steps toward destruction and separation from God.

Jeroboam made golden calves to be worshiped and in the process he enthroned his values: fertility, sexuality, prosperity as things to be worshiped and honored rather than the values and character of God. We are witnessing churches and people today enthroning their own values and the values of our culture, submitting to and worshiping those values rather than submitting to and honoring God and his Word. "Here are your gods – ease, comfort, inclusivity, accommodation, pleasure." Let's take the sacrifice out of our religion. We want Christianity without a cross, salvation without repentance, without turning from sin, we want discipleship without holiness in our life. We end up with a gospel without power, with a thin veneer of Christianity but without the life and the power Jesus intended us to have. No wonder the world ignores us, what we are presenting as Christianity is hardly the faith to which Jesus called us! If we choose a compromised faith, we will end up with nothing! It is a path to destruction and we will end up like Jeroboam. **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12** God deliver us from compromise and grant us the grace and strength and determination to choose obedience to you and your word!

Jeroboam made golden calves for them to worship, a sign of fertility and power and strength. But do you understand that nothing we can make, no symbol, no image can even begin to reflect who our God is or to reflect his power. Our God isn't like anything or anyone else. There is no god like our God. But understand these folks felt they were still serving the God of Israel, they were just including these golden calves as part of their worship of God. Jeroboam

told them, “here are your gods who brought you up out of Egypt.” “So this is what our God is like. Like a golden calf.” How sad and shameful!

Deceived into thinking they were still serving God all the while they were disobeying God and sinning against him and his word. Blessing and curse at the same time. In the summary of what happened to the people after following the way of Jeroboam the bible says, **“They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshiping the Lord, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.” 2 Kings 17:40-41**

Even while they were worshiping the Lord, they were serving their idols. You can get by with blessing and curse at the same time for a while, but only for a while. Ultimately, judgement will come because compromise leads to destruction.

From these kings we learn God is merciful and just and he keeps his word. What he says will happen, happens. In light of everything, all God’s dealings, all the times he called to you and spoke to you, in light of all the chances he gave you and the mercy he showed you, will you ignore him or will you surrender to him? Will someone eventually say of you... “He did what? Even after all God did for him, he did what? He chose what? He went ahead and went his own way? She chose a path of sin rather than obeying God after all God had done? She did what?” “Even after all this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways...” You’ve got a choice. You can surrender your life to Jesus and change your destiny and that of generations after you. People may still say of you, “he did what? He gave his life to Jesus? Hallelujah!” Your choice can make the difference.

I called this message “He Did What?” referring to the error of so many, that after God showed mercy they still walked in disobedience. But we can turn that question into a positive as you come to Jesus and surrender your heart to him. We can say of Jesus, “He did what? He forgave you and showed you mercy? He redeemed you and gave you a new start? He did what?” He kept his promise and gave you a brand new life?

Let me ask, are there areas of compromise in your life? Have you chosen comfort and convenience over obedience to God? Is there something for which you know you need to repent? Is there some area where you know you’ve made the wrong choice and you’ve turned away from God? It’s time to turn back to Jesus. There is still time and opportunity.