

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY102024

# idol threats

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11:14–43; 12:1–24; 2 Chronicles 9:29–12:16.
**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 6.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

One of the most popular television shows in recent years is *American Idol.* Each week Americans vote for the singers they like best while others with the least number of votes get eliminated. The winners at the end of the season cruise into stardom with a practical guarantee of big contracts and instant fame. But what does that word "idol" mean? Is it some word that can be flippantly used on a TV show or does it carry a deeper, spiritual meaning?

The story of Rehoboam is a sobering reminder that idolatry—in any form—will not be tolerated by God. Simply put, an idol is anything that comes before God. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21, NIV). In this statement Jesus identifies the heart of idol worship—people's hearts belong to whatever they value most. This lesson challenges students to reflect on their priorities as they learn how God dealt with Rehoboam's idolatrous ways.

There are many other teaching opportunities in this lesson. For example, the story has a lot to teach us on the topic of leadership. At times, Rehoboam modeled stellar leadership, but he always seemed to relapse into seasons of dreadful failure. Ellen White points out that his failure in leadership had devastating results for a whole nation.

Another area you could explore in this lesson has to do with communication. This story offers many examples (e.g., Rehoboam listening to his young counselors, the tragic stoning of Adoram, the message of Shemaiah, etc.) that provide insights into the value of honest communication.

Another teaching opportunity is offering a discussion related to the issues of creating healthy boundaries in relationships with people and things.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- See that idolatry is rampant in our world today. *(Know)*
- Understand that putting anything above God will produce disastrous results. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to sell out to God. *(Respond)*

### III. EXPLORE

**The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 4**

"God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him . . . the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. . . . (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)"

## TEACHING

### I. GETTING STARTED

***Activity***

*Refer the students to the* What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss*

*why they ranked the items in the way they did.*

Ask the students to consider the list again and reflect on each item, asking themselves if it is primarily a high value according to the kingdom of earth or the kingdom of heaven. *Circle* the items that are important in our worldly culture; *underline* the items that are highly prized in the kingdom of God.

*An alternate activity would be to play a game of Pictionary using the following words:*

Report card, clothes, sports, friends, celebrities, family

Next, explain that an idol is anything that we place above God. Then discuss how any of these things can become an idol. Have each student think of another modern-day "idol" not on the list and have them draw it for the whole group to guess.

### *Illustration*

*Share one or both of the following illustrations in your own words:*

"On one of his many journeys through the Himalayas the Indian evangelist Sundhar Singh discovered a Tibetan preacher whom the people treated with superstitious reverence. He proclaimed Christ without fear of reprisal, even though other preachers were violently persecuted. The preacher told Singh his story.

"He'd once been secretary to a Buddhist priest, but met a Christian from India. Eventually he declared himself a follower of Jesus. He first confessed his faith to his own master, the Buddhist priest.

"Within a few days the preacher was sentenced to death. In front of the temple walls men bound a wet yak skin around him and sewed it up tight. They left him out in the scorching sunshine, where the contracting skin would crush him to death.

"He did not die quickly enough, so red-hot skewers were thrust through the yak skin into his body. Later they tore off the skins and dragged him through the streets to a refuse dump outside town. After further abuse the preacher was dropped on a dunghill. His body showed no signs of life. The crowds left, and the vultures gathered.

"But he was still alive. Somehow he managed to crawl away and recover. Instead of fleeing for his life he marched right back into the village and began preaching about Christ! He could still testify about his faith and could speak of a great God who had come close. The people now listened in awe.

"God sometimes allows us to go through very difficult experiences to give real credibility to our witness. When we experience hardship, we have an opportunity to build a stronger faith. Rather than destroying faith, difficult life experiences make our faith believable to those who observe our steadfast allegiance to God 'comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God' (2 Cor. 1:4).

"We comfort because we are comforted. We comfort others in the difficult times of their lives because God has comforted us in our trying times. Open your heart to receive God's comfort. You will need it to comfort someone else whom God brings into your life this week."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 153, 154.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### *Bridge to the Story*

*Share the following in your own words:*

There's a delusion inside of everyone of us: "I am great and I made myself who I am." This is the "I" disease that ransacked Lucifer in heaven. This obsession with self explains how sin began. Listen to Satan's haughty claims: "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

This is the same attitude we find in King Rehoboam. When responding to the pleadings of his people to lessen the tax burdens that had been imposed by his father, King Solomon, Rehoboam foolishly replied, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:14, NIV). Because Rehoboam chose to put his own interests above God's, Rehoboam was humbled and the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

### *Out of the Story for Teachers*

*After you read the* Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words.*

- Before Rehoboam responded to the request of the Israelites for lower taxes, he sought counsel. The old men advised him to lead with kind-

ness and lessen the burdens. The young men advised him to exercise supreme authority and raise taxes. Ellen White writes: "Flattered by the prospect of exercising supreme authority, Rehoboam determined to disregard the counsel of the older men of his realm, and to make the younger men his advisers" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 89). The result was devastating. Ten tribes of Israel rebelled, and Rehoboam reigned over only two tribes of Israel. What does this story teach us about peer pressure? How might the history of Israel have been radically different had Rehoboam followed the godly counsel of the older men?

- Review the role of Adoram (also called Adoniram) in 1 Kings 12:18. How do you feel when the messenger gets persecuted just for delivering a message? How does this story parallel the story of Jesus? Compare it to Isaiah 53:1–7.
- How might Rehoboam's choices have been different had he followed the counsel of Exodus 20:3, 4 and Matthew 6:19–21? Which parts of these verses stand out to you the most and why?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Psalm 135:15–18; Colossians 3:5–11; 1 John 4:1–3.

### *Sharing Context and Background*

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

1. Herbert Lockyer offers this insightful commentary on Rehoboam's story:

> What a different history of the Jews would have been written had Rehoboam not followed the advice of reckless counselors. When he went to Shechem to be formally crowned as king in succession to Solomon, the people were willing to accept Rehoboam on one condition, namely that he should lighten the burdens imposed upon them by Solomon. This reasonable request . . . should have been acceded to without any hesitation. . . . But Rehoboam lost a golden opportunity of healing the sores of fears and of preserving the unity of God's ancient people. . . .
>
> At first pious (2 Chronicles 12:1), Rehoboam fell into such iniquity that an Egyptian scourge came upon the king and the two tribes he ruled. Brief penitence stayed vengeance, but the rot had set in (2 Chronicles 12:5, 8). So we leave Rehoboam, who went astray in a threefold direction, ruining himself and the people he sought to govern. He lost the best part of his kingdom and reduced Israel as a whole to a subordinate rank among nations.*

When facing important decisions, to whom do you go for advice? How do you decide when you get conflicting counsel? Had Rehoboam known the consequences of his decisions, how do you suppose his legacy would have been different?

2. When "Rehoboam went to Shechem" (2 Chronicles 10:1, NIV), this city, which was 30 miles north of Jerusalem, was a center for the northern tribes. As prophesied by Ahijah



## Teaching From . . .

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

- **Key Text**
  *Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory*
- **Flashlight**
  *Read the* Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  *Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.*
- **Further Insight**
  *Ask them how the quote in* Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

### *Tips for Top-Notch Teaching*

RABBI 101

*Show . . . and Tell*

Bringing tangible symbols into the classroom can often provide memorable metaphors for the students. For example, in this lesson you may wish to develop the theme of the perils of idolatry, or putting anything above God. To talk about it theoretically is good. To illustrate it with tangible symbols might prove to be more effective.

To do this, you could bring twenty-first-century "idols" to display as props. You could work your way down a long line of items (such as an iPod, a TV, a picture of some athlete, a plate of junk food, designer clothes, etc.) while engaging them in a conversation about how each one might be "worshiped" (i.e., placed above God), and how they could set healthy boundaries in their use. When they encounter these common items during the week, they could then well remember the discussion in Sabbath School and be more cognizant of the temptation of worshiping the "idol."

(1 Kings 11:31, 32), Jeroboam had already been anointed for kingship over the 10 tribes of the north (1 Kings 11:26–40). Only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty (2 Chronicles 11:3, 12; cf. 1 Chronicles 4:24–43). These two tribes were henceforth known as the nation of Judah.

3. According to the *Life Application Bible*, the key verse in Rehoboam's story is 2 Chronicles 12:1, which says: "After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD" (NIV). This triggered Shishak's invasion (verse 2). This campaign of Shishak, energetic founder of the Twenty-Second Dynasty of Egypt, has been confirmed by his list of conquered Palestinian cities, engraved on the walls of the temple of Amon at Karnak. This list shows that he plundered northern Israel (as far north as the Sea of Galilee) as well as Judah.

## III. CLOSING

### *Activity*

*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

Ask the students to write out a detailed schedule of a typical day. Have some of them share their schedules. Discuss what takes up most of their days. Then ask them to what activities they wish to give priority. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most important) how would they prioritize the activities? Is there time for God in the schedule? If so, where? When? Gently remind them that any of these activities and priorities can become idols. Idols are, after all, anything that pulls our attention away from God.

### *Summary*

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

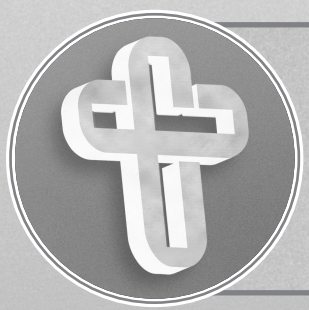
Rehoboam made some painfully stupid choices in his life. The consequences of his decisions tarnished his legacy and scarred the nation of Israel for all succeeding generations.

At the heart of Rehoboam's problem was his sin of idolatry. Worshiping an idol is the last thing most people figure they would ever do. But idols come in a variety of forms. Sleeker, shinier, and more sophisticated idols have replaced the primitive statues; but the result is the same—a divided allegiance between the sacred and the secular.

This lesson offers an opportunity to have a frank discussion with the young people about how they can stay on the right track with God, despite all the idols that clamor for our attention. Take advantage of this chance to challenge them toward uncompromised devotion to God.

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* Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 285.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 6.

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# STUDENT LESSON

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11:14–43; 12:1–24; 2 Chronicles 9:29–12:16.
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# idol threats



Photo by Bill Wolf

## keytext

"After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD."

**(2 Chronicles 12:1, NIV)**

## flashlight

"The twelve tribes of Israel were divided, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin composing the lower or southern kingdom of Judah, under the rulership of Rehoboam; while the ten northern tribes formed and maintained a separate government, known as the kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam as their ruler. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet concerning the rending of the kingdom. 'The cause was from the Lord' " (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 91).

"But as time passed, the king put his trust in the power of position and in the strongholds he had fortified. Little by little he gave way to inherited weakness, until he threw his influence wholly on the side of idolatry" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 93).

# what do you think?

**Rank the following items below in order of importance to the** average teenager (1 is most important, 10 is least important).

___ Good looks
___ Good grades
___ Musical abilities
___ A strong relationship with God
___ A good reputation
___ A loving family
___ Friends
___ Low stress
___ Good health
___ A Christlike character

# did you know?

**Rehoboam's mother was** Naamah, an Ammonite. Her name means "pleasant" or "sweetness," but her actions against the true God of Israel were abominable. She was one of Solomon's many wives who influenced Solomon toward idolatry. Because she was the first lady of the kingdom, Solomon erected in her honor a statue to her god, Molek.

Molek was a god to whom children were often sacrificed. The law given to Moses prohibited the Jews from sacrificing children to Molek; nevertheless, King Solomon introduced Molek into Israel. Molek's shrine was located at a site outside Jerusalem named Gehenna.

Gehenna (first mentioned in the Bible in Joshua 15:8), in Jewish eschatology, is a fiery place where the wicked are punished on judgment day. Originally it referred to a garbage dump in a deep, narrow valley right outside the walls of Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to consume the refuse and keep down the stench. It is also the location where bodies of executed criminals, or individuals denied a proper burial, would be dumped. Gehenna is sometimes translated as "hell."

# INTO THE STORY

**"Rehoboam went to** Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you'. . . .

"Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, 'Come back to me in three days.' The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, 'My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.' "

"So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

"King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day."

"When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered Judah and Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam.

"But this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: 'Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, "This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your fellow Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing." ' So they obeyed the words of the LORD and turned back from marching against Jeroboam."

"Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the LORD's anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. . . .

"King Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD."

**(1 Kings 12:1–4, 12–14; 2 Chronicles 10:16–19; 11:1–4; 12:12–14, NIV)**

# OUT OF THE STORY

*Read all of the texts listed in* Scripture Story *at the beginning of this lesson, and write down the roles played by the following people:*

Adoram _____
_____
_____
_____

Shemaiah _____
_____
_____

Hadad _____
_____

Jeroboam _____
_____

Ahijah _____
_____

Shishak _____
_____

Maachah _____
_____

What can we learn from each of these people in Rehoboam's story? With whom do you identify the most? Why?

_____
_____
_____

After reading Rehoboam's story in the Bible, make a graph of his life, indicating those times when he was strong spiritually as well as those times when he experienced great spiritual failure. What can we learn from his experience that can help to strengthen our relationship with the Lord?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

# punch lines

**"No one can serve** two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other" **(Matthew 6:24, NIV).**

**"Why do the nations say,** 'Where is their God?' Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" **(Psalm 115:2–8, NIV).**

**"They have provoked Me** to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation" **(Deuteronomy 32:21, NKJV).**

# further insight

**"Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up. . . . The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. . . . The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's children unless we are such entirely."**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 44

## Sabbath

**Read Psalm 16:4.**

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked to prioritize what the average teen values the most. Are your personal values any different from what you perceive to be the values of the average teen? If so, in what way?

Review the list, then think about how we can turn any of these things into an idol. What is an idol? Consider the following definitions and then write your own.

**i·dol·a·try:** "Blind or excessive devotion to something" (*Online American Heritage Dictionary*).
**i·dol·a·try:** Can be defined as "anything that comes before God."

My definition:
**i·dol·a·try:** _____
_____
_____

## Sunday

After reading the *Into the Story* section, give a title to each of the major portions of Scripture. Next write the primary lesson we can learn from that text.

*1 Kings 12:1–4, 12–14*

Title: _____
Main lesson to be learned:
_____
_____

*2 Chronicles 10:16–19; 11:1–4*

Title: _____
Main lesson to be learned:
_____
_____

*2 Chronicles 12:12–14*

Title: _____
Main lesson to be learned:
_____
_____

## Monday

**Read 2 Chronicles 12:1.**

Memorize the *Key Text*. Connect the verse to your spiritual journey by reflecting on the following questions:

When have you felt "strong" in the Lord? What factors led to Rehoboam's collapse? In what ways are you vulnerable to these same temptations?

Rehoboam's spiritual compromise impacted "all Israel." Who might be negatively influenced in your life should you drift away from God?

Rehoboam's downfall came when he "abandoned the law of the LORD." What specific aspects of God's law do you struggle with the most? Why?

## Tuesday

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.**

Note the final paragraph in the *Flashlight* section. Rehoboam's spiritual collapse happened "little by little." Identify and then list the "little" compromises that tempt you today. How might these temptations ultimately spell a person's spiritual demise?

_____
_____
_____

## Wednesday

**Read Matthew 6:24; Exodus 20:3, 4.**

In today's reading we're reminded of the words of Jesus: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24, NIV). Write a modern translation of this verse, specifying what "masters" we're tempted to serve today.

_____
_____
_____

Read the verses in Exodus and think about what they are saying. Write them out.

_____
_____
_____

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill" (Acts 17:29, NIV).

## Thursday

**Read 2 Timothy 3:2–5.**

How do you know when something is a high priority to you? Check the top action below that you feel best indicates what someone's most treasured value or object is:

___ Spends heaps of money on it.
___ Invests a lot of time in it.
___ Thinks of it often.
___ Talks about it often.
___ Has dreams at night about it.

Is there any difference between treasuring something (or someone) and making it an idol? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

## Friday

**Read James 1:19.**

Consider the words of Ellen White in commenting on Rehoboam's influence over the Israelites on page 94 of *Prophets and Kings*. Ask yourself: What kind of influence am I on my friends and family?

_____
_____
_____

## this week's reading*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 6.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.