

“THIS THING IS FROM ME”

NO. 2476

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 2, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 22, 1886.

“Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me.”
1 Kings 12:24.

IT is very delightful to read a history in which God is made prominent. How sadly deficient we are of such histories of our own English nation! Yet surely there is no story that is fuller of God than the record of the doings of our British race. Cowper, in one of his poems, shows the parallel between us and the house of Israel. He dwells upon various special incidents in our history, and draws valuable lessons from them. God’s wisdom and power have been conspicuous from the time when this now, full-grown nation, was but like a nursing child. He has nursed and watched over it, protecting it against gigantic foes, and made it to be the defender of His truth, the favored abode of His people. Oh, for a historian who could dip his pen in thoughts of God, and who, from beginning to end of his history, would not be showing us the crafty policy of kings and cabinets, but the finger of God! We need, nowadays, to have history written in some such style as appears in these Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles—then might history become almost like a new Bible to us! We would find that, as the book of revelation agrees with the book of creation, so does the book of divine providence in human history agree with both of them, for the same God is the Author of all these works! If we cannot get anybody to write such histories, yet let us continually amend the errors, and add appendices to such records as we have, for God is God, and God is *everywhere*, and blessed is the man who learns to spy Him out!

Notice, next, what I pointed out to you in our reading, [the Exposition which was always expounded *before* the sermon] what power was possessed by God’s prophets under the Old Testament. Here is one Shemaiah—some of you never heard of him before, perhaps you will never hear of him again. He appears once in this history, and then he vanishes! He comes and he goes—only fancy this one man constraining to peace an hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, warriors ready to fight against the house of Israel—by giving them in very plain, unpolished words, the simple command of God—“Thus says the Lord, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel: return every man to his house.” And it is added, “They hearkened, therefore, to the Word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the Lord.” Why have we not such power? Perhaps, brothers, we do not always speak in the name of the Lord, or speak God’s Word as God’s Word! If we are simply tellers of our own thoughts, why should men mind *us*? If we speak the word which we, ourselves, have fashioned, what is there in our anvil that it should command respect for what we make upon it? But if we can rise to the height of this great argument, and speak the truth of God as messengers of God, and there leave it, believing in it, ourselves, and expecting great results from it, I know that there will come more from our ministries than we have ever seen as yet! When the apostle Peter spoke to the lame man at the temple gate, he said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” And he *did* rise up and walk because the name of Jesus Christ was relied upon! We have need to preach the gospel, not as though our persuasion, much less our oratory, were to prevail with men, but believing that there is an intrinsic power in the gospel, and that God the Holy Spirit will go with it to work the divine purpose, and accomplish the decrees of the Most High! We have need to stand near to God, and to be more completely overshadowed by His presence—and to be, ourselves, more fully believers in the Divine Majesty—and then shall we see greater things than these! Surely, God must have meant that, under the New Testament, there should be a power in His Word even greater than that which rested on it under the Old Testament!

Note one more lesson conveyed by this incident. It would be a grand thing to preach only one sermon, and to be as successful as Shemaiah was! It would be far better than to preach ten thousand, and to accomplish nothing by them all. I hope the net result of our ministry will not be like that of the famous

leader who, with his troops, marched up a hill, and then marched down again. A man may take many years to say nothing, and he may very elaborately and very eloquently discharge himself of that which it was totally unnecessary for him to have said, but it would be far better to be surcharged with one message—and to deliver that one in the power of Almighty God, even if the speaker’s voice is never heard again! I pray that those of us who do preach the gospel may preach each sermon as if that one discourse were worth a lifetime—worth the putting forth of every faculty that we possess, so that, if we never preached again, we might nevertheless have done a life-work in a single sermon! What an opportunity is mine tonight! What an opportunity you, also, will have, my brothers, when you confront your congregation next Lord’s-Day—an opportunity which angels might envy you! Though you do not gather together a hundred and eighty thousand men, yet you may reach as many as that through the one sermon you are going to preach next Sunday, for one person converted by the Holy Spirit, through you, may be the means of bringing in many others, and eventually there may come out of your one effort a harvest that cannot be counted! A forest once slept within a single acorn! The beginning of the great lies in the little! Let us therefore earnestly pray God that we may preach as dying men to dying men, and deliver each discourse as if that one message was quite enough to serve for our whole life-work. We need not wish to preach another sermon provided we are enabled to so deliver that one that the purpose of God shall be accomplished by us, and the power of his Word shall be seen upon our hearers.

With these remarks by way of preliminary observations, I want to prove to you from our text that, first, *some events are very especially from God*. Secondly, *when they are seen to be from God, they are not to be fought against*. And, thirdly, *this general principle has many special applications*, some of which we shall try to make.

I. First, SOME EVENTS ARE ESPECIALLY FROM GOD—“This thing is from Me.”

I do not know what some people believe, for they seem to try to do without God altogether, but I believe that God is in *all* things—that there is neither power, nor life, nor motion, nor thought, nor existence apart from Him. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.” By Him all things exist and consist. Like foam upon the wave, all things would dissolve away did not God continue them, did not God uphold them. I see God in *everything*—from the creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud to the fall of a dynasty! I believe that God is in the earthquake and the whirlwind, but I believe Him to be equally in the gentlest zephyr, and in the fall of the sere leaf from the oak of the forest. Blessed is that man to whom there exists *nothing* in which he cannot see the presence of God! It makes this world a grand sphere when God is seen everywhere in it from the deepest mine to the remotest star. This earth is a wretched dark dungeon if once the light of the presence and the working of God is taken away from it.

Notice also, dear friends, that God is in events which are produced by the sin, and the stupidity of men. This breaking up of the kingdom of Solomon into two parts was the result of Solomon’s sin and Rehoboam’s folly, yet God was in it—“This thing is from Me, says the Lord.” God had nothing to do with the sin or the folly—but in some way which we can never explain—in a mysterious way in which we are to believe without hesitation, God was in it all! The most notable instance of this truth of God is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ—that was the greatest of human crimes, yet it was foreordained and predetermined by the Most High—to whom there can be no such thing as crime, nor any sort of compact with sin. We know not how it is, but it is an undoubted fact that a thing may be from God, and yet it may be worked, as we see in this case, by the folly and the wickedness of men. Neither does this, in the least degree, interfere with human agency in its utmost freedom. Some who have held that man is a free agent have attempted to vindicate free agency as if predestination were the contradiction of it, which it is not! We who believe in predestination also believe in free agency as much as they do who reject the other truth. Others hold predestination, and straightway they begin to rail at all who believe in the responsibility and free agency of men. My brothers, there is nothing to rail at in either doctrine, the two things are equally true. “How, then,” asks someone, “do you reconcile them?” These two truths of God have never fallen out, as far as I know, and it is poor work to try to reconcile those who are true friends. “But,” says the objector, “how do you make them seem to be true friends?” I do not make them seem to be true friends! I bless God that there are some things in the Bible which I never expect to understand while I live here. A religion which I could perfectly understand would be no religion to me—when I had mastered it, it would never master me! But to my mind it is a most delightful thing for the believer to bow before inscrutable mysteries, and to say, “My God, I never thought that I was infinite. I never dreamt that I could take Your place, and understand all things. I believe, and I am content.” So I believe in the free agency of men, in their responsibility and wickedness, and that everything evil comes of them. But I also believe in God, that, “this thing” which, on the one side of it, was purely and alone from men, on

another side of it was still from God who rules both evil and good, and not only walks the garden of Eden in the cool of a summer’s eve, but walks the billows of the tempestuous sea, and rules everywhere by His sovereign might!

How, then, was “this thing” from God? Well, clearly, it was from God in two ways. First, it was so *as a matter of prophecy*. The prophet Ahijah had prophesied that the ten parts of the torn garment which were given to Jeroboam should be symbolic of the ten tribes that would be given to him when they had been torn away from the house of David. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, as God’s words always are.

And, secondly, “this thing” was from God *as a matter of punishment*. He sent it as a punishment for the sins of the house of David of which Solomon had been guilty when he set up other gods before the Most High, and divided the allegiance of his kingdom from Jehovah by bringing in the gods of Moab, Ammon, and Egypt. God ordained this evil that He might chastise the greater evil of lack of loyalty to Himself on the part of His servant Solomon. Yes, my brothers and sisters, God sets evil against evil that He may destroy evil—and He uses that which comes of human folly that He may manifest His own wisdom!

So there are some events which are especially from the Lord, although it seems not so, and this is, to us, often a great source of consolation. We have said to ourselves, “However did things get into this tangle and snarl?” Look at the professing church at this present moment—what is there about it that can at all cheer the child of God? All things appear dark and complicated. They seem to be built on quicksand and that which is superficial, unsubstantial, dreamy, and deceptive is everywhere! Still, the Lord lives and the rock of our salvation fails not. As He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, so does He, also, with the folly, and the wickedness of man—and the remainder of both He restrains! “The Lord sits upon the floods; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Hallelujah!

II. The second thing evidently taught by our text is that **WHEN EVENTS ARE SEEN TO BE FROM THE LORD, THEY ARE NOT TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST.**

Rehoboam had summoned his soldiers to go to war against the house of Israel, but, inasmuch as it was from God that the 10 tribes had revolted from him, he must not march into the territories of Israel, nor even shoot an arrow against them.

The thing that is happening to you is of the Lord, therefore resist it not, for *it would be wicked to do so*. If it is the Lord’s will, so may it be. To put our will against His will is sheer rebellion against Him! Trace an event as distinctly from God, and then the proper course of action is that which the psalmist took, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it.” Absolute submission is not enough—we must go on to *joyful acquiescence* in the will of God. If the cup is bitter, our acquiescence must take it as cheerfully as if it were sweet. “Hard lines,” you say. “To hard hearts,” I say! But when our hearts are right with God, so well do we love Him that if it ever came to a conflict *anywhere*, whether it should be our will or His will that should prevail, we should at once end the conflict by saying, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” It is nothing but wickedness, whatever form it assumes, when we attempt to resist the will of God.

But, next, while it is wicked, *it is also vain*, for what can we do against the will of God? Shall the rush by the river resist the north wind? Shall the dust rise up in conflict with the tempest? God is Almighty—if that were all, it were enough, for who can stand against His power? But He is also all-wise, and if we were as wise as He is, we should do as He does! Moreover, He is all goodness, and He is ever full of love. Judged of according to the divine understanding, everything that He wills must be right. Why, then, shall I dare contend against His strength, His wisdom, and His love? It must be useless to do so. Who has resisted His will? Who could succeed if He did?

Next, *it would be mischievous*, and would be sure to bring a greater evil upon us if we did resist. Had this king Rehoboam gone out to fight with the far greater tribes which had revolted, it might have resulted in the desolation of Judah, and the destruction of Jerusalem. He was much wiser in putting up his sword into its sheath, for it would have been disastrous to the last degree for him to break the command of God, and go to war against Israel. And depend upon it, brothers and sisters, there is no way of bringing afflictions upon ourselves like refusing to bear afflictions! If we will not bear the yoke that is laid upon us, and heed the gentle tugging of the rein, then the goad and the whip will be used upon us. Nothing involves us in so much sorrow as our refusal to submit to sorrow. If we will not take up the cross, the cross, perhaps, will take us up—and that is a far worse lot than the other! Endure, submit, acquiesce—it is the easiest way, after all—for if you are a child of God, and you rebel against Him, you will have to smart for it. But if you are *not* His child, and you rebel, like proud Pharaoh, God will set you up to be a

monument for men to wonder at as they see how sternly Jehovah deals with stubborn sinners who say, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” Whenever, therefore, a thing is distinctly from the Lord, it is not to be resisted.

III. Now I come to what may be more interesting to you, that is, to make a practical application of this subject, for THIS GENERAL PRINCIPLE HAS MANY SPECIAL APPLICATIONS. I believe it often happens that events are most distinctly from the Lord, and when it is so, our right and proper way is to yield to them.

I could narrate many very amazing things that have happened to me, but I will not. Only I am reminded, just now, of one that I *will* tell you. There sat, one Lord’s-Day, in that left-hand gallery, a young Hindu gentleman wearing a scarlet sash. I preached that morning from this text, “What if your father answers you roughly?” [Sermon #1188, Volume 20—*A Word for the Persecuted*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] and I had hardly reached the vestry at the back before this young Hindu gentleman was there with an aged man, who is now with God—a well-known Christian man—and all in a hurry the young man said, “Sir, has Mr. E----- told you about me?” “No,” I said, “I have not seen him for months. What could he have told me about you?” “Are you sure that you never heard of me before?” “To my knowledge, I never heard of you, and never saw you before.” “Well then, sir,” he said, “there *is* a God, and that God is in this place!” “How so?” I asked. “Last night, I told this gentleman here,” he answered, “that I was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but that, when I went home to India, I should be disinherited by my father, and I felt sure that I should not have the courage to stand out as a Christian. And then my friend said, ‘Come and hear Mr. Spurgeon tomorrow morning,’ and I came in here, and you preached from those words, ‘What if your father answers you roughly?’ Verily,” he said, “the God of the Christians *is* God, and He has spoken to me this day.” That was another illustration of our text, “This thing is from Me.” Has it not often happened so? The providential working of the Holy Spirit is a very wonderful subject. They who are the Holy Spirit’s servants learn to depend upon Him for every word they are to utter! They sometimes feel their flesh creep, and almost every hair on their head stands on end at the way in which they have unconsciously spoken so as to depict to the very life the character of their hearers—casual hearers, perhaps—as if they had photographed them though they knew them not! Oh, you who are the Lord’s workers, commit yourselves to God’s guidance! The more you can do it, the better, for often and often you will have to say of an event that happens to you, “This thing is from the Lord.”

Again, dear friends, another case in which this principle applies is *when severe afflictions arise*. I think that, of all afflictions to which we should bow most readily, those take the first place that are distinctly from the Lord. For instance, the deaths of dear friends, or when we cannot accuse ourselves of having done anything that can have contributed to the affliction that has come upon us, or when we have suffered losses in business though we have been engaged honestly and industriously in doing all we can to provide things honest in the sight of all men. There are some afflictions which remind me of a term which I have seen in the charters of ships—“the act of God.” Certain calamities at sea are called “the act of God.” So there are certain events in life which may be very terrible, and very sorrowful, but if they are the act of God, they come to us thus *distinguished*, “This is from God.” Will you not accept it from the Lord? “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Will we not say, with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”? “This thing is from Me.” O you who are His children, accept the chastisement from your Father’s hand, and kiss the rod with which He strikes you!

Sometimes, also, we are troubled by certain disquieting plans proposed by our friends or our children. We do not like their schemes, and we say, “No, do not act so. It seems to me to be quite wrong.” Yet, sometimes, a boy will do this and that, or a friend has made up his mind to take a certain course, and, at last, when you have pleaded, persuaded, urged, and done your best to turn them from their purpose, if the thought should creep into your mind, “Perhaps, this thing is from God,” then stop your persuasions, as Paul’s friends, when he would not be persuaded, ceased to argue with him. Sometimes, that which seems to be a great mistake may, nevertheless, in the hand of God, prove to be the right course. Our judgment is but fallible, but the judgment of the Most High is always correct. Struggle not too long, lest you bring yourself into another sorrow—but be willing to yield at the right time, saying, “Perhaps, this thing is from the Lord.”

A very pleasant phase of this same truth of God is *when some singular mercy comes*. Have not many of you experienced some very remarkable deliverances? Has not God been pleased to open for you rivers in the desert, and waters in high places where waters are not usually found? Well, whenever singular

and startling mercy comes to you, say, “This is from God.” It is a delightful thing when you get a present from a very choice friend who says, “This is from me.” You value it all the more because of the person from whom it comes. If you have nothing but a crust of bread, take your knife and cut it, and say, “This is from the Lord.” But if He has given you a downy bed on which to rest your weary limbs, and if He has indulged you with many luxuries, say, “This is from the Lord.” And everything shall be the brighter and the better to you because He gave it to you. It is the best part of the gift! Often, a little thing which we might despise in itself, becomes invaluable because of the giver—and all your life shall be full of rich treasure, yes, with very “curios” worthy to be stored away, and looked at with admiration throughout the rest of your days because—“This is from Me,” is so clearly written upon them all.

Still applying the principle of our text, let me remind you that when a man receives a very striking warning, he ought to hear a voice at the back of it, saying, “This thing is from Me.” When near to die, wrecked, almost aground, or delivered out of an awful accident, if such has been your case, hear, man, out of all the hurry-burly from which you have escaped, “This is from Me.” A soldier, who has heard the bullets whistle by his ear, or who comes out of a battle deprived of a limb, but still alive, should hear this voice, “This is from Me.” Oh, that men would hear the voice of God, and turn from their sins! If the Lord has been so gracious as to spare your life, count that His long-suffering means repentance to you, and that His sparing you is a call to you to give up your sins and turn to Him!

The same principle applies when it is not a striking warning, but when it happens that men have some *tender emotions stealing over them*. Some of you to whom I am speaking are unconverted, but there have been times when, in the house of God, you have felt very strange. You may not have actually prayed, but you have *almost* prayed that you might pray! “Please God, once I get home,” you have said, “I will go to my room and fall upon my knees before You.” Have not even the most thoughtless of you, when alone, felt as if you must *think*? In the watches of the night, have you not been made to consider? A policeman who came to join the church this week, said to me, “Often, when I tread my solitary beat, I feel as if I must think of God. He seems so very near to me when there is not a sound to be heard except the tread of my own feet.” Well, if ever you feel that, yield to it! O dear hearts, if ever you find an unusual softness stealing over you, do not resist it! It may be that it is the blessed Spirit come to emancipate you from your obstinacy and hardness—and to bring you into the new life—the life of tenderness and love! When He draws you, run after Him! Let tender impulse and gentle drawing suffice you, for all is for your good. Yield yourselves to the Spirit’s influence even now! While He bids you, believe in Jesus and live! While He whispers to you, “Repent,” repent and be converted! God grant it, in His infinite mercy! Our time has gone, but may what has been spoken be remembered throughout eternity because it can truly be said, “This thing is from Me, says the Lord.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *1 KINGS 11:40-43; 12.*

God threatened Solomon, on account of his setting up other gods, that He would tear away a great part of the kingdom from him, and that He would set up another king in his place.

1 Kings 11:40-43. *Solomon sought, therefore, to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.* After great mountains there usually come low hills. After Solomon comes Rehoboam. Grace does not run in the blood, we may be sure, for even human wisdom does not descend from father to son. There is no necessary transmission of gifts and talents, much less of grace, from one generation to another.

1 Kings 12:1-3. *And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt), that they sent and called him.*

It was a sure sign of great discontent when the people sent for a rebel to be their spokesman!

3, 4. *And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, Your father made our yoke grievous. Now, therefore, make you the grievous service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve you.*

This was a very natural request. These Oriental monarchs took their thrones as by a kind of divine right, and there was a tendency among the people to demand something like a constitution, some regulations by which they should not be so heavily oppressed. I do not know whether they had been oppressed by Solomon or not. Certainly, the realm as a whole was greatly enriched under his government, but the wisest ruler must not expect that he will have the uniform love of the people—there will be come discontented ones in every community.

5. *And he said to them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.*

One commentator says that it is the only sign of wisdom that there was in Rehoboam, that he took three days to consider the answer to this question. Perhaps if he had answered it rightly, it would have been better if answered immediately. Still, it is a good rule, when there is an important question before you, to take time to consider it. The mischievous point is that Rehoboam did not wait upon *God* for guidance in this emergency. Had he been like his grandfather, David, those three days would have been spent with God in prayer—and he would have come back with a greater wisdom than even his father, Solomon, possessed, to answer the people in this thing. We often blunder over very ample matters when we speak without asking guidance of God. But in the most intricate circumstances our course will be perfectly clear if we commit our way to the Lord.

6-8. *And King Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon, his father, while he yet lived, and said, How do you advise that I may answer this people? And they spoke to him, saying, If you will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that had grown up with him, and which stood before him.*

He was probably a man 40 years of age, and therefore no longer young, but he had, all the while, been playing the part of a young man. He had not been old in wisdom when he was young in years—it would have been well for him if he had been.

9-11. *And he said to them, What counsel give you that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying Make the yoke which your father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, Thus shall you speak to this people that spoke to you, saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, but make you it lighter to us; thus shall you say to them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did load you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father has chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

Old men are not always wise, and young men are not always wise—he who consults with only men shall yet learn the truth of this verse, “Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” Among Rehoboam’s counselors, the old men had no real principle to guide them. They said to the king, in effect, “Just butter these people with soft words, delude and deceive them with the idea that you are going to yield to them, and then, when you once get the reins into your own hands, you can govern the nation as you like.”

This was a wicked policy, but the young men said to the king, “No, no, no! Do not pretend that you will listen to the people. There is nothing like putting a bold face on it, and just letting the people know that you will not yield to them. They will be startled by what you say—have you not the authority and example of your father, Solomon? Nobody ever dared speak a word of this kind to *him*, so put it down at once and be bold.” There is no principle, you see, about the advice in either case—it is all policy, but the latter policy is sure *not* to succeed. I counsel you, brothers—no, I will give you no counsel except that I counsel you to take counsel of God! Wait upon Him, for He knows what you should do in every difficulty that may arise. If Rehoboam had only had wits enough, and grace enough to lay this case before his God, He would have given him somewhat of the largeness of heart, and the wisdom which He gave to His father, Solomon.

12-15. *So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; and spoke to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Therefore the king hearkened not to the people; for the cause was from the LORD.*

The great, deep, mysterious providence of God was quietly working even behind the folly and the domineering pride of this foolish man!

15, 16. *That He might perform His saying, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not to them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel: now see to your own house, David. So Israel departed to their tents.*

He that speaks roughly must expect to be answered roughly. Let us learn from this incident as one might who sees the warning light of a beacon, and tacks his ship to avoid the rock on which it is placed.

17, 18. *But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute.*

Having made trouble, the king tried to make peace. He selected one of the ancient officers of his father, Solomon, to be his ambassador, but he selected the very worst that he could have found, “Adoram, who was over the tribute.” The man who had been a leader in exactions from the people, or who had been *thought* to be so, was not the one to act as peace-maker!

18-20. *And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David to this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.*

See what mischief may be done by one foolish man! And, let me add, see what evil may come of the ill conduct of a wise man! Some think that Rehoboam was Solomon’s only son, though he had a multitude of wives. That I cannot tell, but it is an amazing thing that so wise a man should have but one son mentioned, here, and that he should be such a foolish one. Yet what could be expected to come out of such a family as Solomon’s? He whose own house is as disorderly as his was must expect that those who come after him will be no better than they should be. Blessed is that home where the Lord is the Master, where His law is loved and His word is obeyed!

21-24. *And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. But the Word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying Speak to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me. They hearkened, therefore, to the Word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the Word of the LORD.*

It is a very striking fact that this one prophet did but speak in God’s name, and that vast host disbanded in obedience to his word! It gives us some hope concerning Rehoboam, yet we cannot be sure that it was he who was thus obedient to the prophet—the people may have been better than their king. At any rate, they did not fight against their brethren, but they went their way. Oh, that God’s servants in these days could speak with anything like such power as Shemaiah possessed!

25-27. *Then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from there, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah. Jeroboam is moved by policy, you see. It is very hard, I believe, to be a ruler over men, and yet to be a servant of God. There seems to be connected with politics in every country something that besmears the mind, and defiles the hand that touches it. The king of Judah had but little wit, and this king of Israel has too much cunning—he is a far-seeing man, and perceives that if the people go up to Jerusalem to worship—they may, by-and-by, return their allegiance to the house of David.*

28. *Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold your gods, O Israel which brought you up out of the land of Egypt!*

Truly, history repeats itself—only if it is bad history, it is apt to grow worse! “Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” This is almost exactly what they said in Aaron’s days when he made the ox which Scripture sarcastically calls a calf, the Egyptian image of strength. Jeroboam makes not merely *one* calf, but two—and he speaks of them in nearly the same language as they used concerning the golden calf in the wilderness—“Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

29, 30. *And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Daniel. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even to Dan.*

I suppose that Jeroboam did not mean to draw them away from worshipping Jehovah, but he would have Jehovah worshipped under some visible image, and not according to the rule which God had laid down. That is just where mischief often begins, both in the church and in the world. Men are willing to worship God if they are allowed to have a ritual and symbols which they have themselves devised, and so, instead of the divine simplicity of the New Testament, they have many things added, things to please the taste, aesthetic, beautiful, sensuous—all of which take the mind off from that sublime worship of the invisible God which alone can be acceptable before Him. It is not for us to determine how we will worship God—we are to worship Him after His own manner, for His commandments are still in force—“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make to you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them nor serve them.” “Well, but the cross,” someone says, “surely that is a truly venerable symbol?” Let it be as venerable as you please, but we must not use it in divine worship! The ox was supposed to set forth strength—surely it was an admirable emblem of the Almighty—yet God pours contempt upon it when He bids His inspired servants to speak of it as the image of an ox that eats grass, as if that could be any symbol of the Most High! “This thing became a sin.”

31. *And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*

For the sons of Levi went over to Judah and remained faithful to God. And the better sort of people probably dreaded to assume the office to which God had called the sons of Levi—none would undertake it but the very lowest of the people.

32. *And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like to the feast that is in Judah.*

He shifted the month, but retained the day—the fifteenth day of the eighth month instead of the seventh. “That was quite unimportant,” say some. I do not agree with them, for *nothing* is unimportant that has to do with the law of God’s house! Disobedience may be more plainly seen in some of the non-essentials than in an essential thing. At all events, we have no right to alter jot or tittle of the divine command.

32, 33. *And he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart.*

It is a strong condemnation of anything in religion if it is devised by a man’s own heart. We are to do *what* God bids us, *as* God bids us, *when* God bids us, and *because* God bids us. But that which is merely of our own free will, ordained and manufactured by ourselves, is practically the worship of *ourselves*, and not the worship of God.

33. *And ordained a feast to the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Thus Israel was led astray at the very beginning. She came to the crossroads, and took the wrong turn. And she went from bad to worse. God save all of us from following her evil example, but may we all serve the one living and true God, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—71 (SONG I), 208, 211.

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