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The March of Folly

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

153rd General Assembly

- **TUESDAY @ 9:00 AM** in 417 CAP
- **TUESDAY @ 12 NOON** in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are held every week on Tuesdays. *Two times are available for Bible study:* (1) a legislative Bible study from 9:00-9:30am in 417 CAP; and, (2) an open-to-all Bible study from 12:00-12:45pm in 123 CAP (*where we have ministry donors provide lunch*). The *weekly* Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. **The study for the 2016 General Assembly is the book of First Kings.**

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. My sole intent is to serve you, and to be a resource to you for pastoral care, counsel, and prayer. **Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.**

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Studies

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Tuesday, 22 March 2016

I Kings 12 – “The March of Folly”

King George III never intended to lose the American colonies. Indeed, there would not be a greater catastrophe for the British than the loss of the colonies, especially since they were the king’s most important colonial possession. The colonies granted tremendous strategic advantage to the British, especially as the preeminent world power, and particularly in relation to the persistent conflicts with the French and the Spanish.

The colonies were also vital economically because the British depended upon them as a primary source of raw materials for their industries. The British continued to fight the colonists in a war they could not win, primarily for personal reasons, as King George did not want to be remembered historically as the individual who lost a primary component of the British Empire.

Despite the hazards involved with antagonizing the colonies, King George and his advisors issued a series of policies that seemed unconcerned with the thought process of the colonists, and which

would provoke the colonies into rebellion. The British regarded the Americans as nothing more than uneducated commoners, and thus treated them with an arrogance that suggested they knew what was best for the colonists, and, therefore, they did not need to consider the concerns and suggestions of the people they ruled.

There was never a time during the Revolutionary War in which the British attempted to enlist troops from the Loyalist (“Tory”) Americans because the British deemed the colonists as worthless (despite the fact that they were proving to be a formidable foe on the battlefield). Demonstrating an ignorance of the circumstances in the American colonies, the British dismissed the colonial grievances and mocked their intent to fight against the British. Eventually, precisely what the British feared and what they provoked occurred, namely that the French would lend support to the American rebellion. The provocation was the consequence of an intense resentment among once loyal subjects who felt compelled to defend themselves against a king to whom they once willingly heeded.

“NO EXPERIENCE OF THE FAILURE OF HIS POLICY COULD SHAKE HIS BELIEF IN ITS ESSENTIAL EXCELLENCE” (“PHILIP II,” IN THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, 11TH ED., 29 VOLS., ED. HUGH CHISHOLM [CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND: AT THE UNIVERSITY PRES, 1911] 21:385).

King George and his advisors appear to have been determined to act in accordance with their own self-interest, and thus the colonies were forever lost. In her work entitled *The March of Folly* (New York: Random House, 1984), American historian Barbara W. Tuchman argued that such occurrences are not unique. She defined folly as “the pursuit of policy contrary to the self-interest of the constituency or state involved,” even though “a feasible alternative course of action” was available (p. 5). Foolish leaders are compelled by self-deception, especially “in assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs,” and from refusing “to benefit from experience” (p. 7).

Foolish leaders cause horrendous damage (some of which is often irremediable), whereas wise leaders can bestow a positive legacy for contemporary and future generations. Tuchman’s first example of “the march of folly” is Rehoboam, King of Israel. Rehoboam’s actions divided his nation and he forever lost the largest component of it. One must note the irony in the book of 1 Kings: the epitome of foolish leadership is the son of the king who began his reign with a prayer for wisdom, and whose proverbs, which contrast foolishness and wisdom, were frequently addressed to his son.

Solomon’s forty year reign was remarkable, yet his later years of apostasy were the result of a divided heart earlier in his reign, and thus he introduced many hazards that were unnoticeable due to the glistening appearance of his kingdom, yet which could only be avoided with the utmost caution. Solomon’s foolish son, Rehoboam, approached those hazards recklessly and thoughtlessly. Rehoboam’s reign was truly “the march of folly.”



Capitol Commission Bible Studies

Tuesday (22nd of March) @ 9:00am – 9:30am, 417 CAP
Tuesday (22nd of March) @ 12 Noon – 12:45pm, 123 CAP
lunch provided from sponsorship by State Representative Tom Rice



Enhancing Trust

THE FOLLY OF REHOBOAM

(1 Kgs 12:1-15) In our initial study of 1 Kings, we noted that with the weakening of the kingly office, which eventually became so decadent that God could seldom use the kings as his representative, the Lord will primarily utilize a different office to further his sovereign purposes: the prophet. As the prophets began exercising a more strategic role than they did previously, a definite variance developed between the prophets who proclaimed God's message and the kings who were frequently degenerate. The discord becomes readily apparent in the last section of 1 Kings, and culminates in the conflict between the prophet Elijah and King Ahab. Chapters 12—16 emphasize the activity of the kings, and the division of the nation and its results, whereas chapters 17—22 emphasize the ministry of the prophets.

Chapters 12—14 describe the events that culminated in the formal division of the kingdom. God revealed the reason for the nation's separation through the prophet Ahijah: it was the Lord's judgment upon the sin of Solomon and the people (1 Kgs 11:29-39). First Kings 12 reveals how that division occurred: through the follies of an unwise leader.

In the United States, of course, we do not have kings, yet please do not miss the relevancy of this biblical text for you and me. Each one of us has spheres of responsibility wherein we provide leadership. Rehoboam's life is recorded in the Bible "as an example, . . . written for our instruction" (1 Cor 10:11) so that we readily identify the mistakes that leaders cannot replicate.

. . . GOD'S STEWARDSHIP IS A TRUST GRANTED BY HIM TO BE ADMINISTERED ON HIS BEHALF.

In contrast to his father (1 Kgs 3), Rehoboam did not regard the wisdom of God as a priority; rather, he "consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon" (12:6), and even then he forsook the correct advice (v. 8). Rehoboam was similar to many today who seek counsel today because he simply wanted someone to give agreement to what he had already decided as his course of action. Rehoboam was raised in luxury, and thus he was entirely unaware concerning the burdens of the common people.

The godly individual leads by serving (cf. Matt 20:20-28), and an authentic leader seeks to lessen the burdens that others bear (cf. 11:28-30; 23:4). Godly and wise individuals recognize that leadership is a trust (stewardship) for the purpose of bringing benefit to God's people on the Lord's behalf. Foolish individuals use their authority and influence for their own benefit.

Godly and wise individuals must be faithful when the Lord God grants a stewardship (1 Cor 9:17-18). God has granted a stewardship to elected officials and their staffs (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:11; Rom 13:1; Tit 3:1-2), and it is indispensable to understand that God's stewardship is a trust granted by Him to be administered on his behalf. The only requirement for a steward is to be trustworthy (1 Cor 4:2).

The foolish king used the people to augment his authority as opposed to using his influence to aid the people in their day-to-day progress. The consequence of such actions was a divided nation, which is precisely what Ahijah prophesied (1 Kgs 11:29-39). As much as God's people are to model unity (cf. John 17:23; Eph 4:1-6), one must be discerning in accepting the reality that some divisions are the work of the Lord.

THE FOLLY OF JEROBOAM

(1 Kgs 12:16-33) When the kingdom divided between the northern (Israel) and the southern (Judah) kingdoms, Jeroboam feared that his people would return to Jerusalem for worship and thus instituted a rival religious system in the north. He established places for worship at Bethel and Dan, and informed the people that they no longer needed to journey all the way to Jerusalem for worship. The religious system that Jeroboam instituted was characterized by expediency, which made it easy for the people to sin (cf. 1 Kgs 12:28). Jeroboam and his people abandoned the authentic worship of God, and thereby repeated the sin of Aaron (Exod 32). The reality that his actions were condemned by God was not nearly as important as providing a worship locale for the people so they did not have to travel so far.

People are often willing to introduce practices into their worship simply because it requires less effort, and this was certainly the scenario with Jeroboam's idolatrous system. We must guard ourselves so that convenience never becomes more determinative in our lives as opposed to what God has said unambiguously.

Jeroboam's religious system was replete with compromise. He sought to reproduce all the aspects of the worship in Jerusalem, by patterning it in a manner similar to the worship instructions that God revealed to Moses. Jeroboam even chose his own priesthood and instituted his own feasts (vv. 31-32). Combined with these elements that were comparable to the genuine, there were also aspects of false worship (cf. the "two golden calves," v. 28).

The system in the north was an amalgamation of the worship of the Lord God with the worship of Baal. Jeroboam's religion was popular, yet it did not possess God's approval. First Kings 13, therefore, begins with God sending an unnamed prophet to Jeroboam's altar for the purpose of denouncing his actions.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the nobility to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through verse-by-verse Bible teaching. In the Bible, we see God's love for the world, especially those who have been placed in authority. The divine mandate is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four primary areas of discipleship: (1) *evangelize* those who have not known saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.